

# STATE-BY-STATE STUDENT-TO-COUNSELOR RATIO MAPS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**NACAC**

National Association for  
College Admission Counseling

# Introduction

Research has shown that secondary school counselors play a critical role in facilitating the transition to postsecondary education.<sup>1</sup> Counselors' influence on postsecondary outcomes is particularly significant for low-income and first-generation college students, as well as students of color.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the ability of public school counselors to assist students with college planning is often hindered by unmanageable caseloads—up to three times the number of students recommended by the American School Counselors Association (ASCA).

In 2018, in partnership with ASCA, NACAC produced a State-by-State Student-to-Counselor Ratio Report, which tracks counselor caseloads over a 10-year period from 2004–05 to 2014–15. This report (and the accompanying data visualizations) updates that work with the most recent state-level data and extends it to include school district level-data for 2015–16.<sup>3</sup> The district-level student-to-counselor ratios are provided to further inform policy discussions at the local, state, and federal level about the need to hire, train, and equip more school counselors.

## State of School Counseling

ASCA recommends that schools strive to maintain a ratio of no more than 250 students per counselor.<sup>4</sup> In 2015–16, only two states, Vermont and New Hampshire, had average ratios that met this standard. There are several additional data points worth noting that also suggest a critical lack of access to school counseling assistance for students nationwide.

- The national average during this time was 470 students per counselor, nearly double the recommended ratio.
- Nearly one in five students don't have access to a school counselor, leaving approximately 8 million students without access to proper counseling support.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.7 million students go to a school with a police officer but no counselors.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to contending with high student caseloads, postsecondary planning is one of many responsibilities for school counselors, including, for example, course scheduling, personal needs counseling, and test administration. According to NACAC's *State of College Admission* report, during the 2017–18 school year, school counseling departments at public schools spent an average of only 21 percent of their time on postsecondary admission counseling.<sup>7</sup> Twenty-five percent of time was devoted to personal needs counseling, followed by 23 percent for course selection and scheduling. Comparatively, private non-parochial school counselors spent 54 percent of time on postsecondary counseling, 12 percent on course choice and scheduling, and 10 percent on personal needs counseling. The time constraints on public school counselors, compounded by high student caseloads, create negative implications for college access, particularly for the students who are most likely to need support in making the transition to postsecondary education.

<sup>1</sup> Velez, E. D. (2013). *How Can High School Counseling Shape Students' Postsecondary Attendance?* National Association for College Admission Counseling. <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/hsls-phase-iii.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> McDonough, P. M. (2005). "Counseling and College Counseling in America's High Schools." *State of College Admission*, 107-121. National Association for College Admission Counseling, Arlington, VA.

<sup>3</sup> National Association for College Admission Counseling. (2019). *State-by-State Student-to-Counselor Ratio Maps by School District: Data Visualizations*. NACAC Research Tableau Public Site. <https://public.tableau.com/profile/nacac.research#!/>

<sup>4</sup> American School Counselors Association. (2005). *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/ASCA%20National%20Model%20Templates/ANMExecSumm.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> The Education Trust. (2019). *School Counselors Matter*. [https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/30161630/School-Counselors\\_2019\\_V7.pdf](https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/30161630/School-Counselors_2019_V7.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> American Civil Liberties Union. (2019). *Cops and No Counselors*. <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/cops-and-no-counselors>.

<sup>7</sup> Clinedinst, M. & Patel, P. (2018). *State of College Admission*. National Association for College Admission Counseling. [https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018\\_soca/soca18.pdf](https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018_soca/soca18.pdf).

## Unequal Access

For the 2015-16 academic year, the average number of students per counselor varied substantially by state, with the highest caseloads in Arizona (902), Michigan (744), and California (708), and the lowest in New Hampshire (217) and Vermont (195). Although state averages provide a general sense of how states are meeting students' school counseling needs, they can mask substantial differences in student-to-counselor ratios within states. The school district-level analysis presented in this report highlights these important differences.

The unequal access to school counselors across states and districts exists along with other disparities in resource allocation, compounding the disadvantage faced by students in low-resourced areas. For example, adding to the abundant research on funding inequities among US public schools, a recent study by EdBuild revealed that overwhelmingly white school districts received \$23 billion more from state and local funding than predominantly nonwhite school districts in 2016.<sup>8</sup> In addition, The State of Funding Equity Data Tool from the Education Trust highlights funding disparities that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income families.<sup>9</sup>

Schools, particularly those in low-income areas, will need a substantial infusion of resources to alleviate the current inequities. The school district-level analysis presented in this report allows us to identify school districts most in need of outreach and support and to better advocate for effective policy changes.

## About the Data

The data used to create the student-to-counselor ratio maps was downloaded from the US Department of Education's publicly available Common Core of Data.<sup>10</sup> For each school district, we used enrollment (total students, all grades, excluding adult education) and total guidance counselors (full-time equivalent). The data reflected in this report is from 2015–16, the latest available during the completion of this project.<sup>11</sup>

The maps included in this report were produced using Tableau software, which provides geographic boundaries for counties. This was appropriate for some states where school district boundaries align with county boundaries. However, when required, we used shapefiles downloaded from the US Census Bureau website to accurately map school district boundaries.<sup>12</sup> Due to data and map boundary issues, we were unable to map the ratios for Vermont and Ohio. As a result, we share data for these states in a table format.

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<sup>8</sup> EdBuild. (2019). *\$23 Billion*. <https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion>.

<sup>9</sup> The Education Trust. (2019). *The State of Funding Equity Data Tool*. <https://edtrust.org/map/?mapname=bypoverty>.

<sup>10</sup> US Department of Education. (2019). *Common Core of Data Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey: School Year 2015-16*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved using ELSi tableGenerator. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx>.

<sup>11</sup> Utah and Wyoming did not report data for 2015-16. In 2014-15 (latest data available), Wyoming reported an average of 219 counselors. In 2013-14 (latest data available), Utah reported an average of 683 counselors.

<sup>12</sup> US Census Bureau. (2019). *Cartographic Boundary Files – Shapefile, 2017 School District Boundaries*. <https://www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/carto-boundary-file.html>.

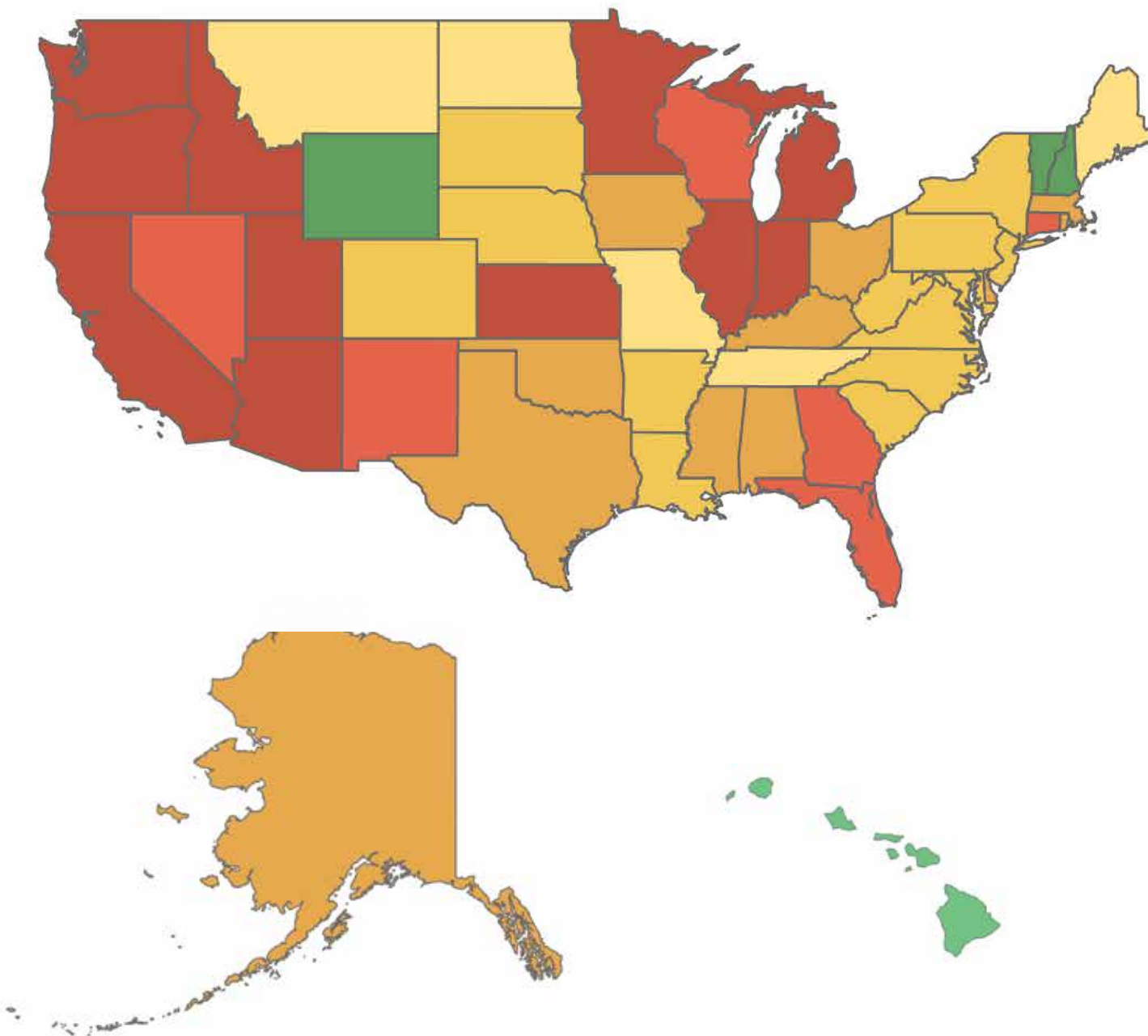
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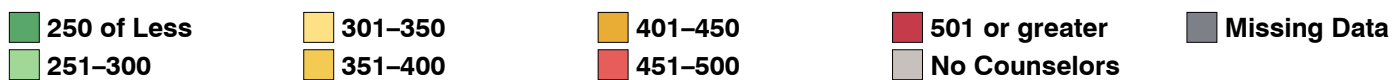


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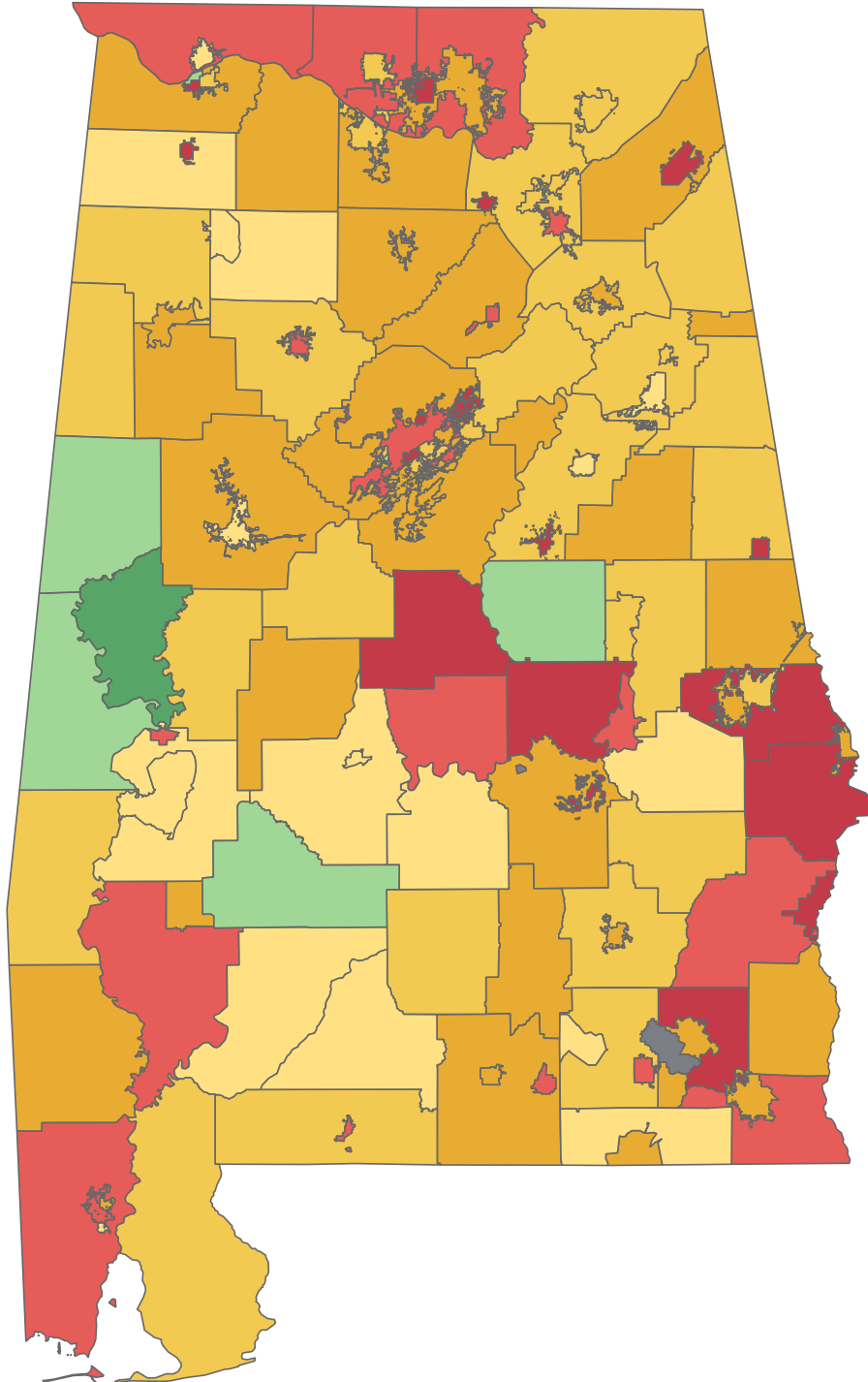


NOTE: Utah and Wyoming did not report data for 2015–16. The data presented in the above map for WY is from 2014–15 and for UT is from 2013–14 (latest available).

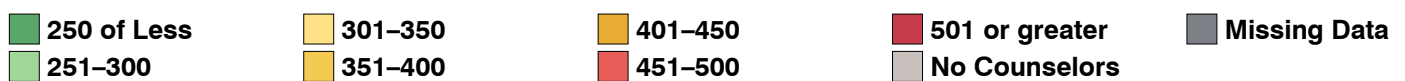
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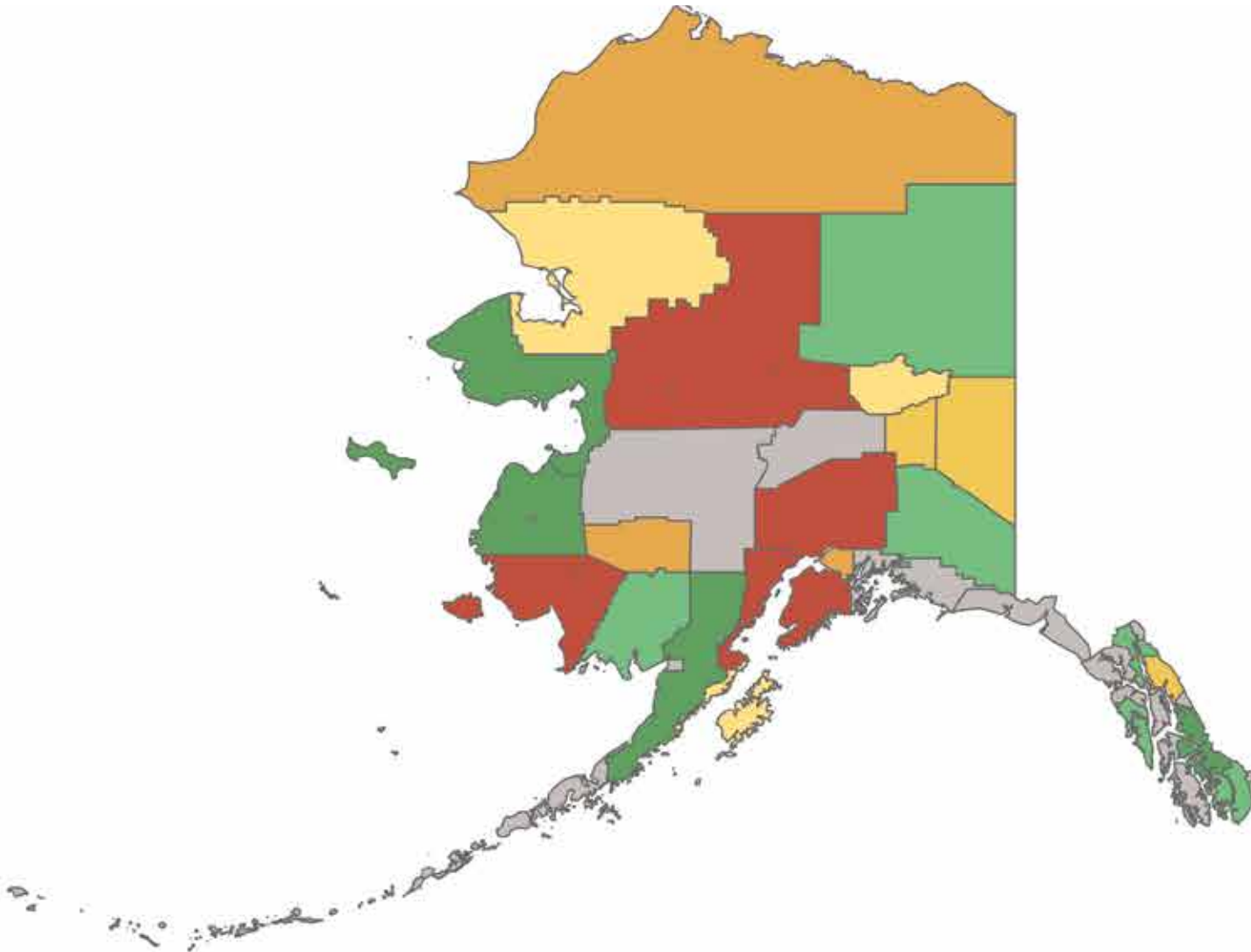
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## Counselor Ratio



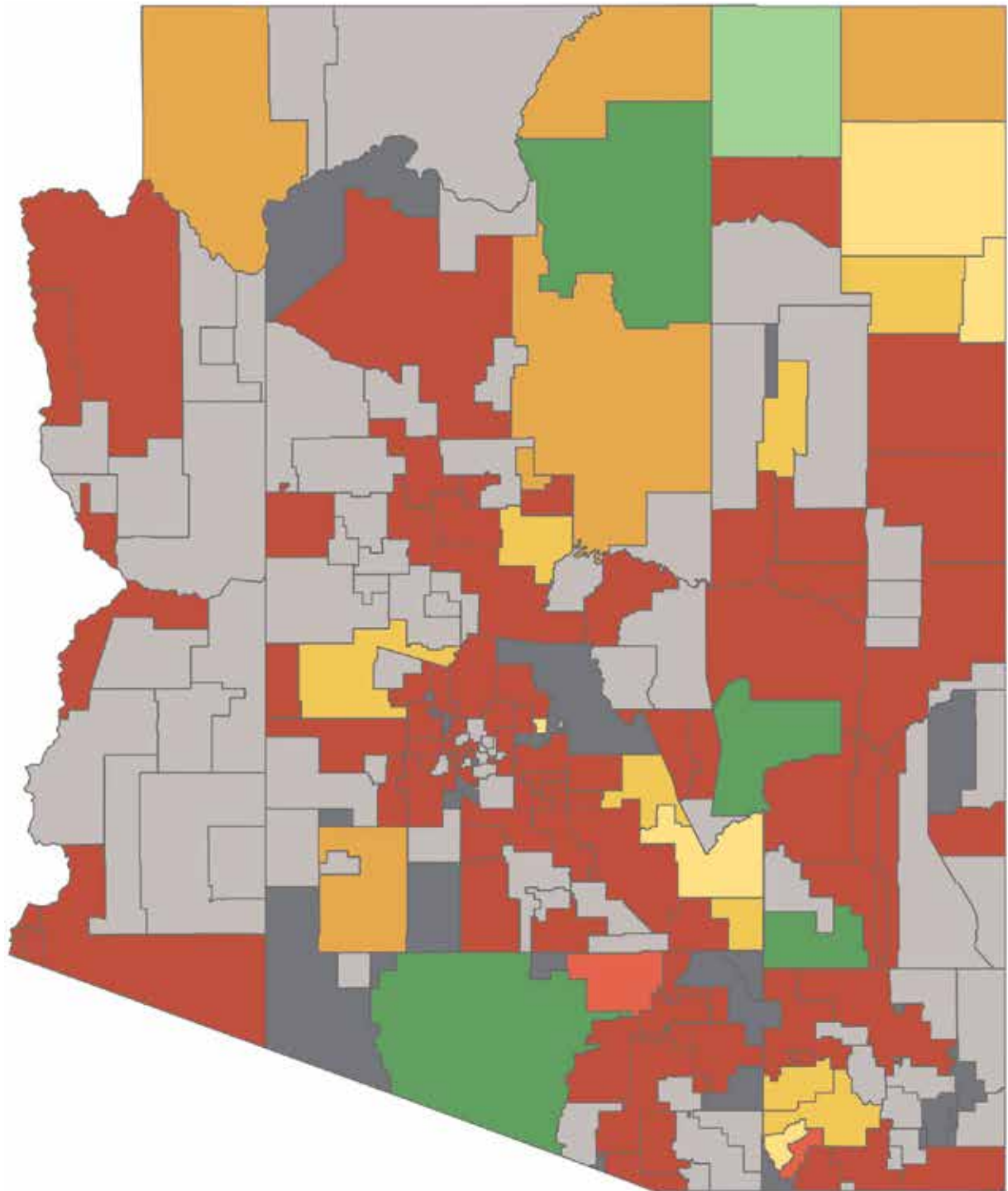
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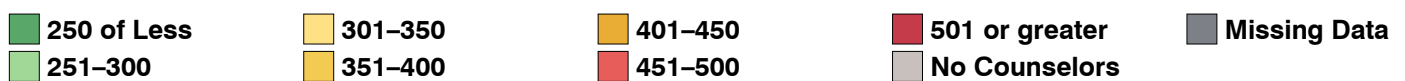
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251-300	351-400	451-500	No Counselors	

# Arizona

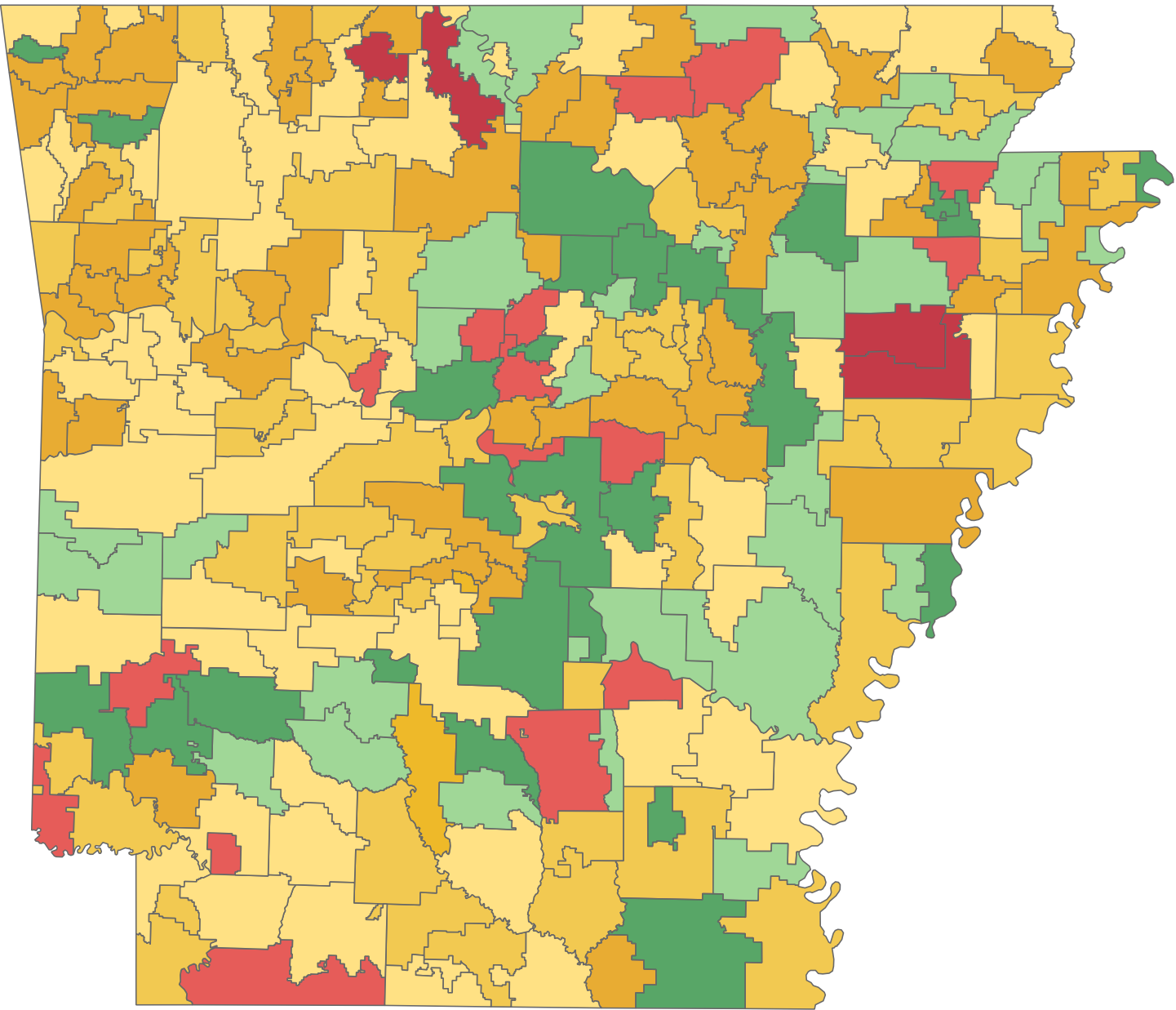


## Counselor Ratio





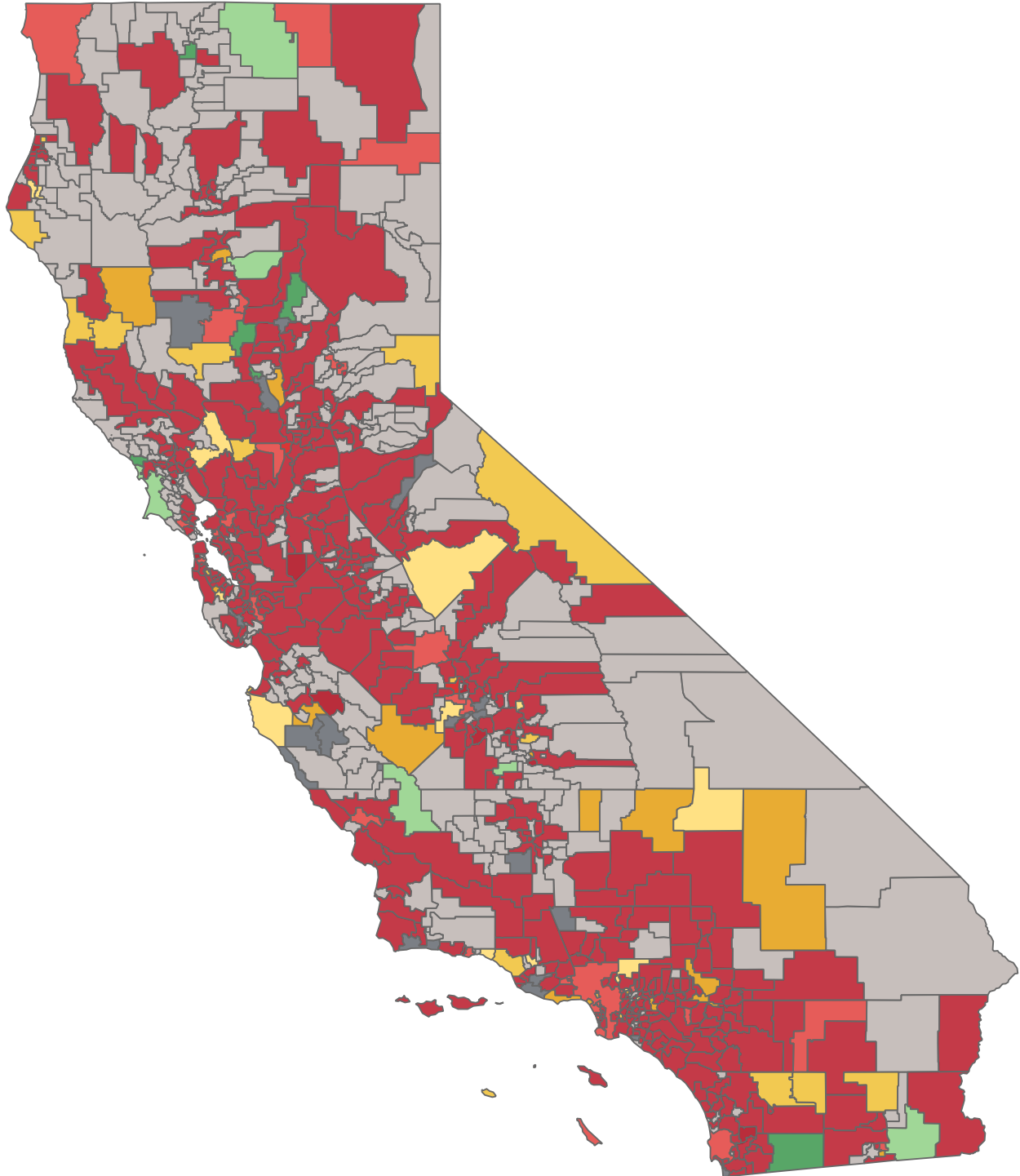
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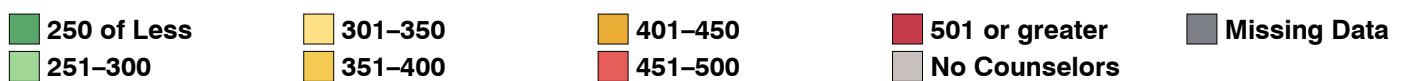
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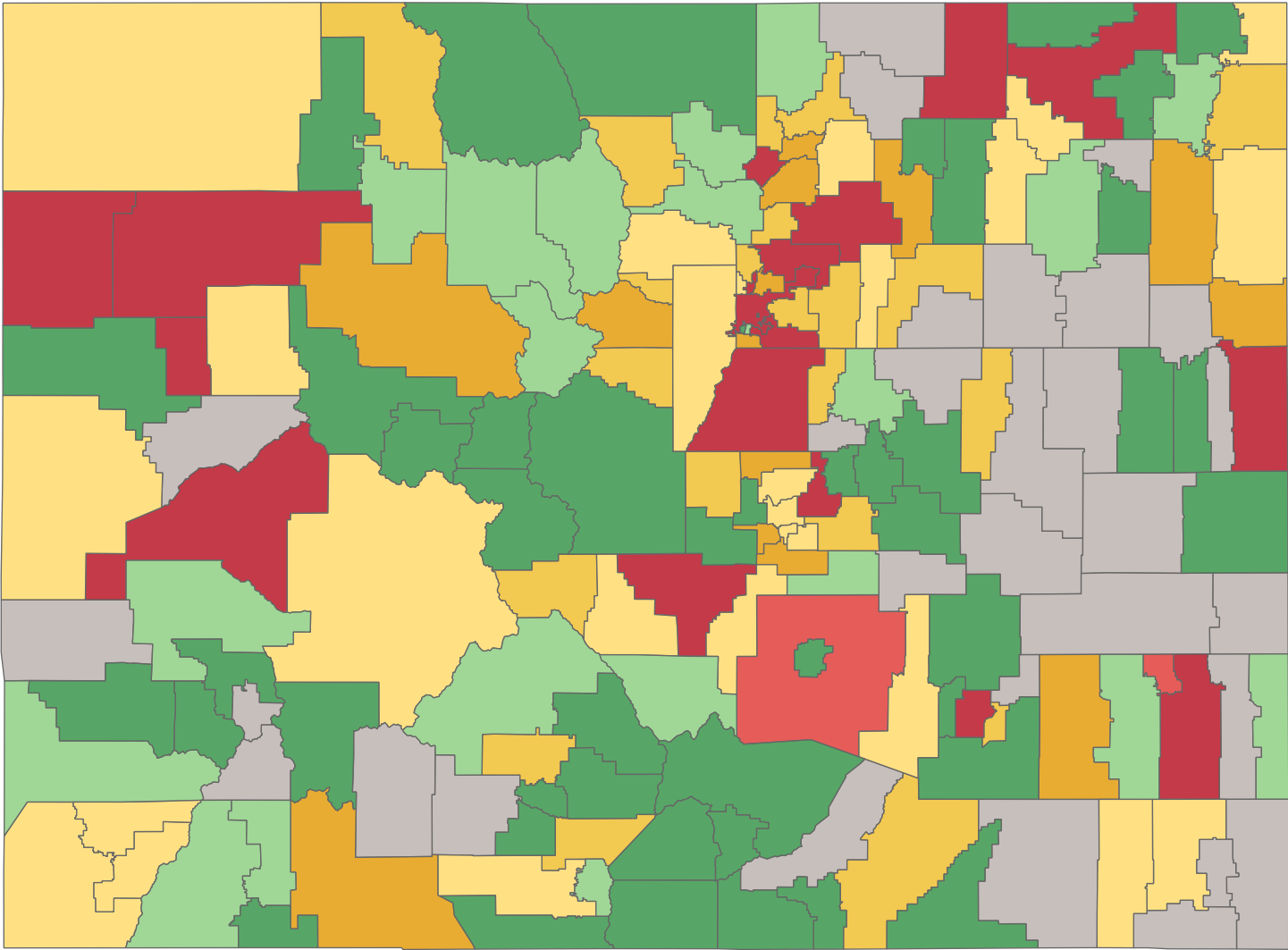
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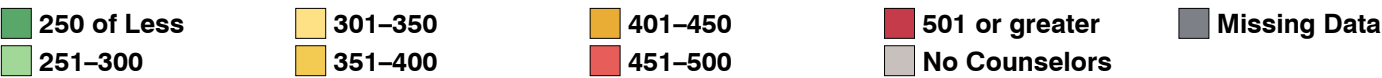
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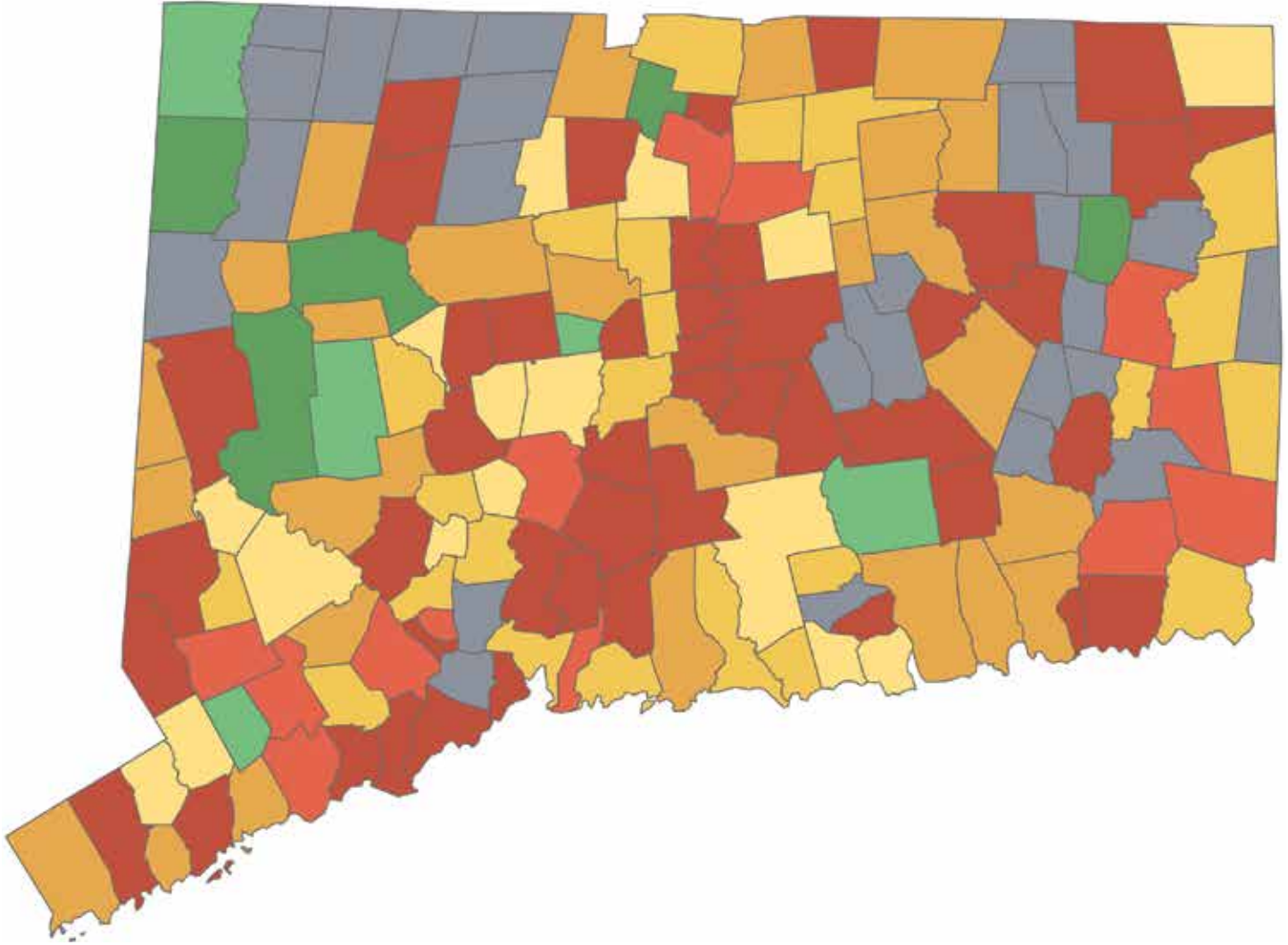
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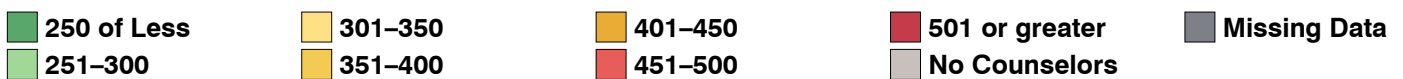
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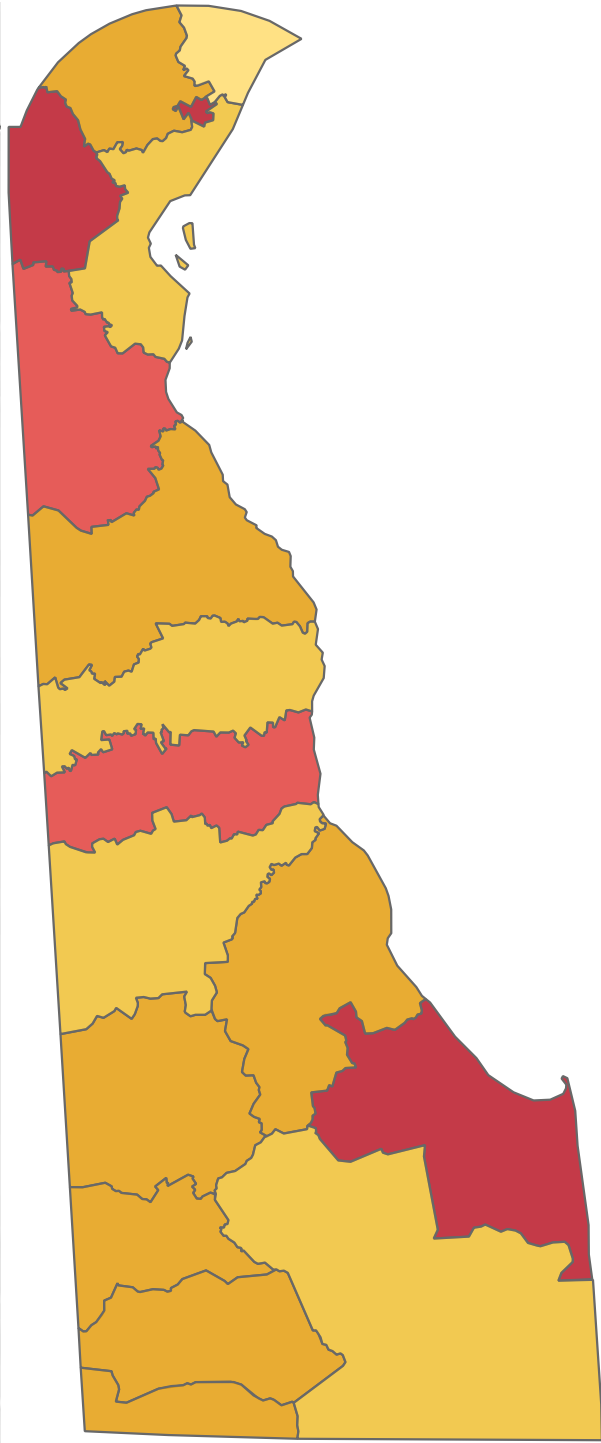


## Counselor Ratio





# Delaware



## Counselor Ratio

250 of Less	301-350	401-450	501 or greater	Missing Data
251-300	351-400	451-500	No Counselors	

# District of Columbia



## Counselor Ratio

250 or Less  
251–300

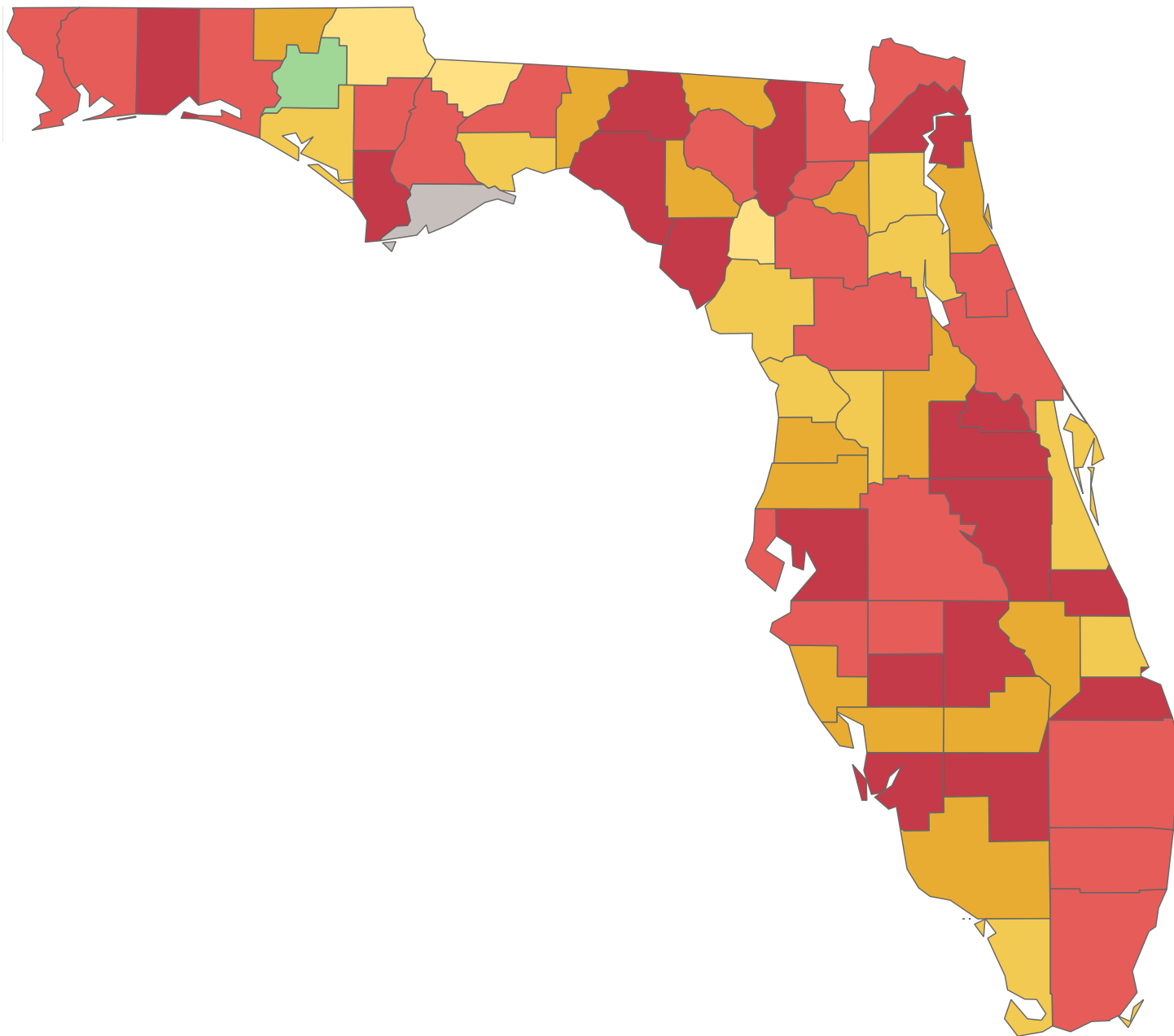
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451–500

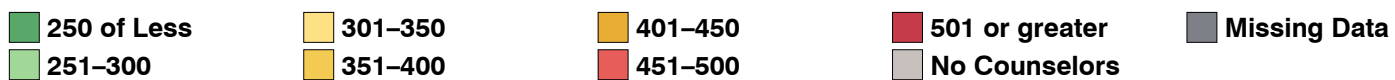
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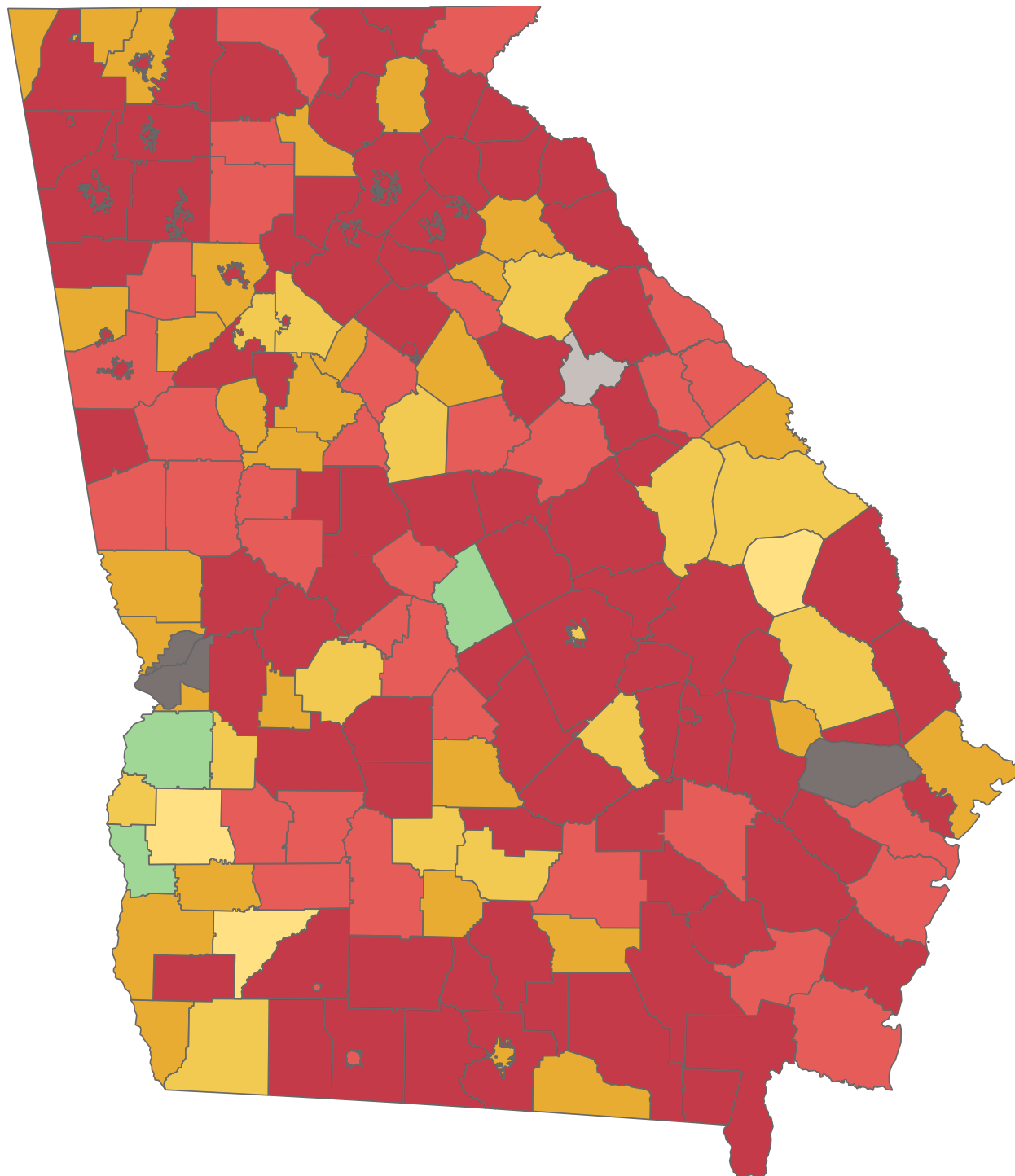
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## Counselor Ratio



# Georgia



## Counselor Ratio

250 or Less  
251-300

301-350  
351-400

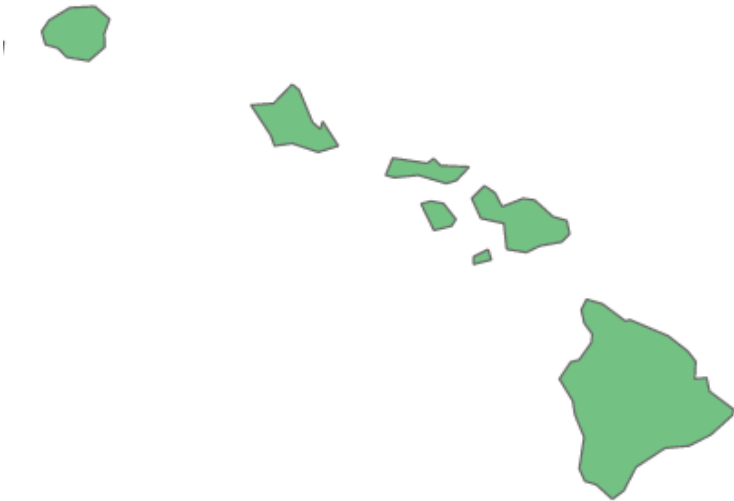
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451-500

501 or greater  
No Counselors

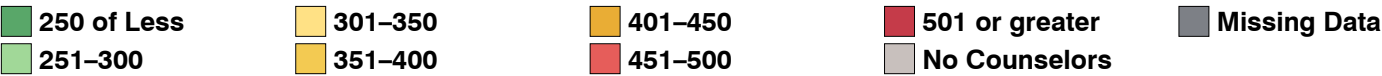
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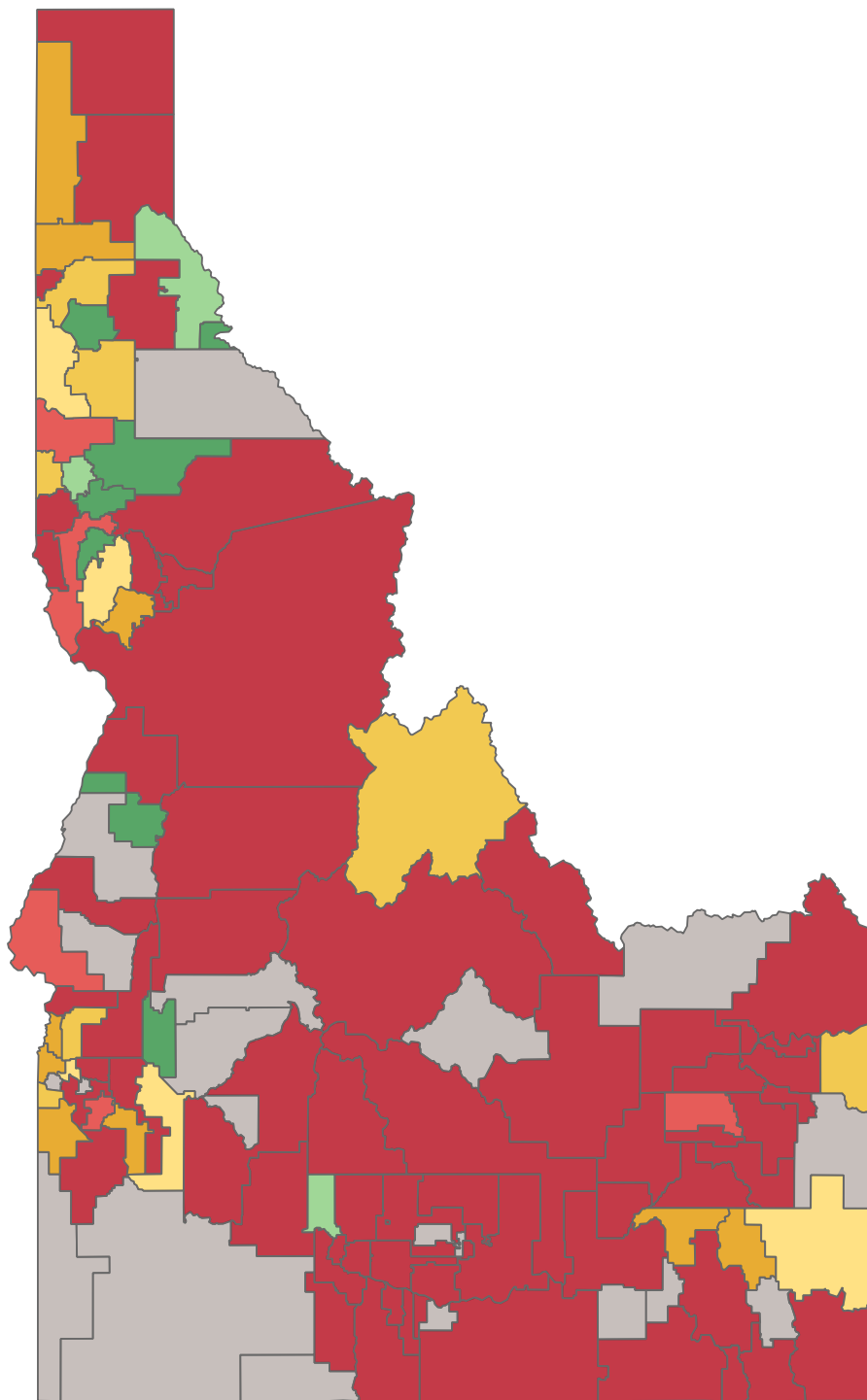
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## Counselor Ratio



# Idaho



## Counselor Ratio

250 or Less  
251-300

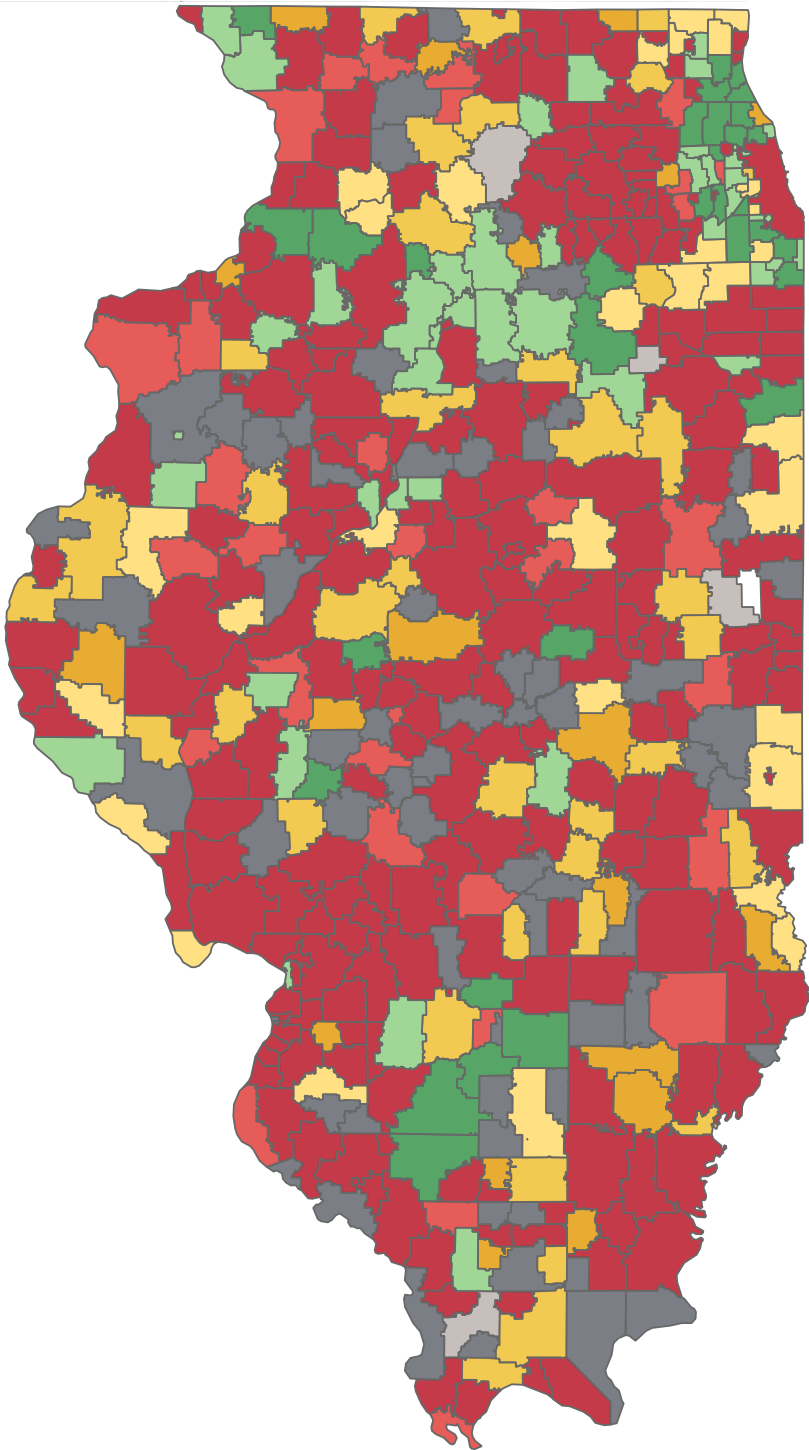
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351-400

401-450  
451-500

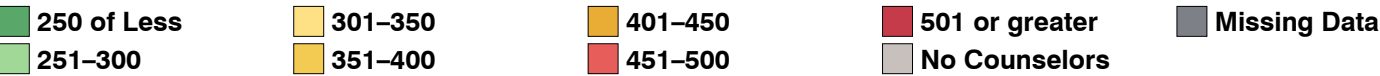
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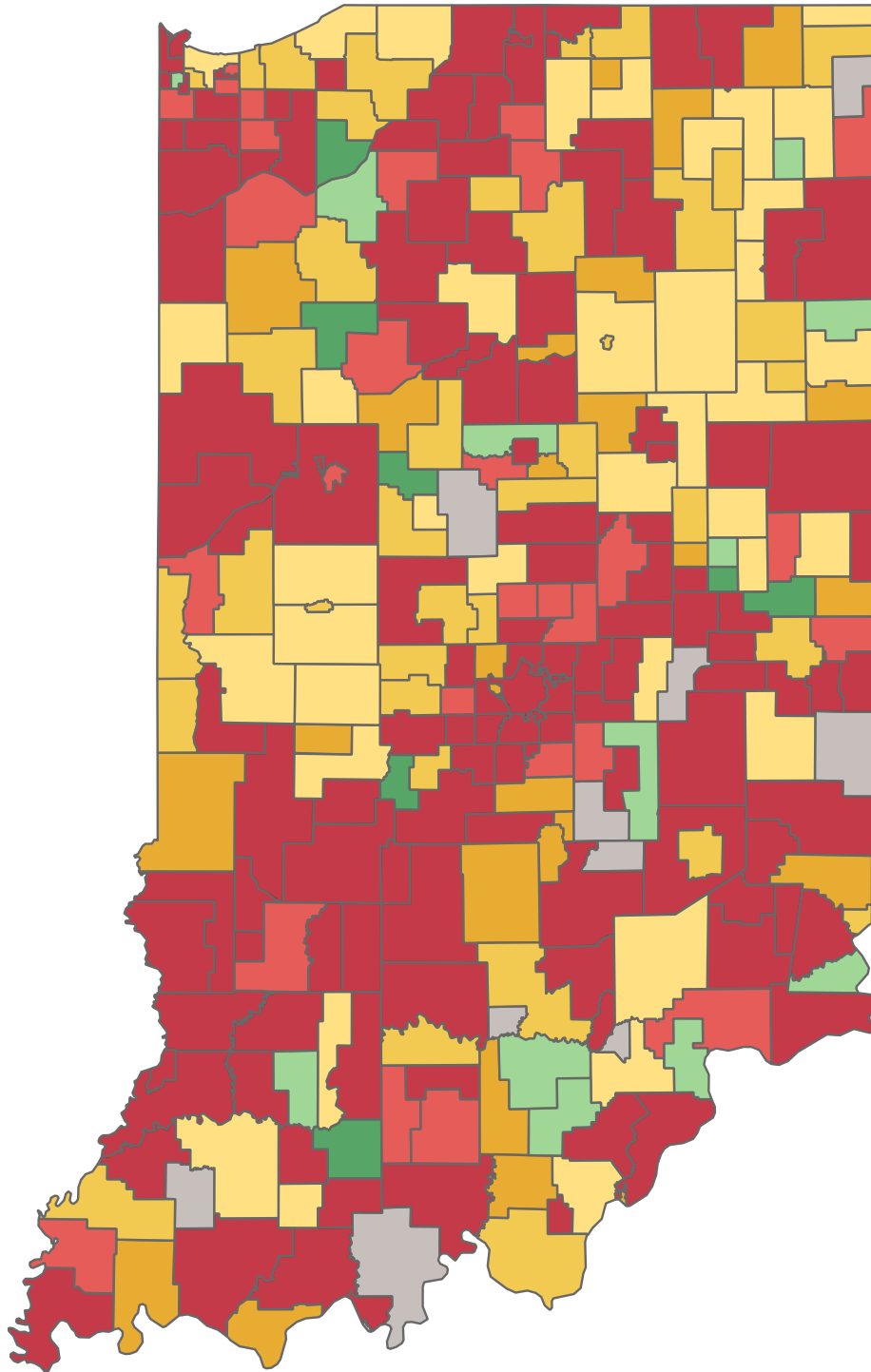
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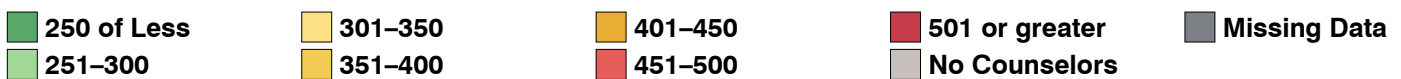
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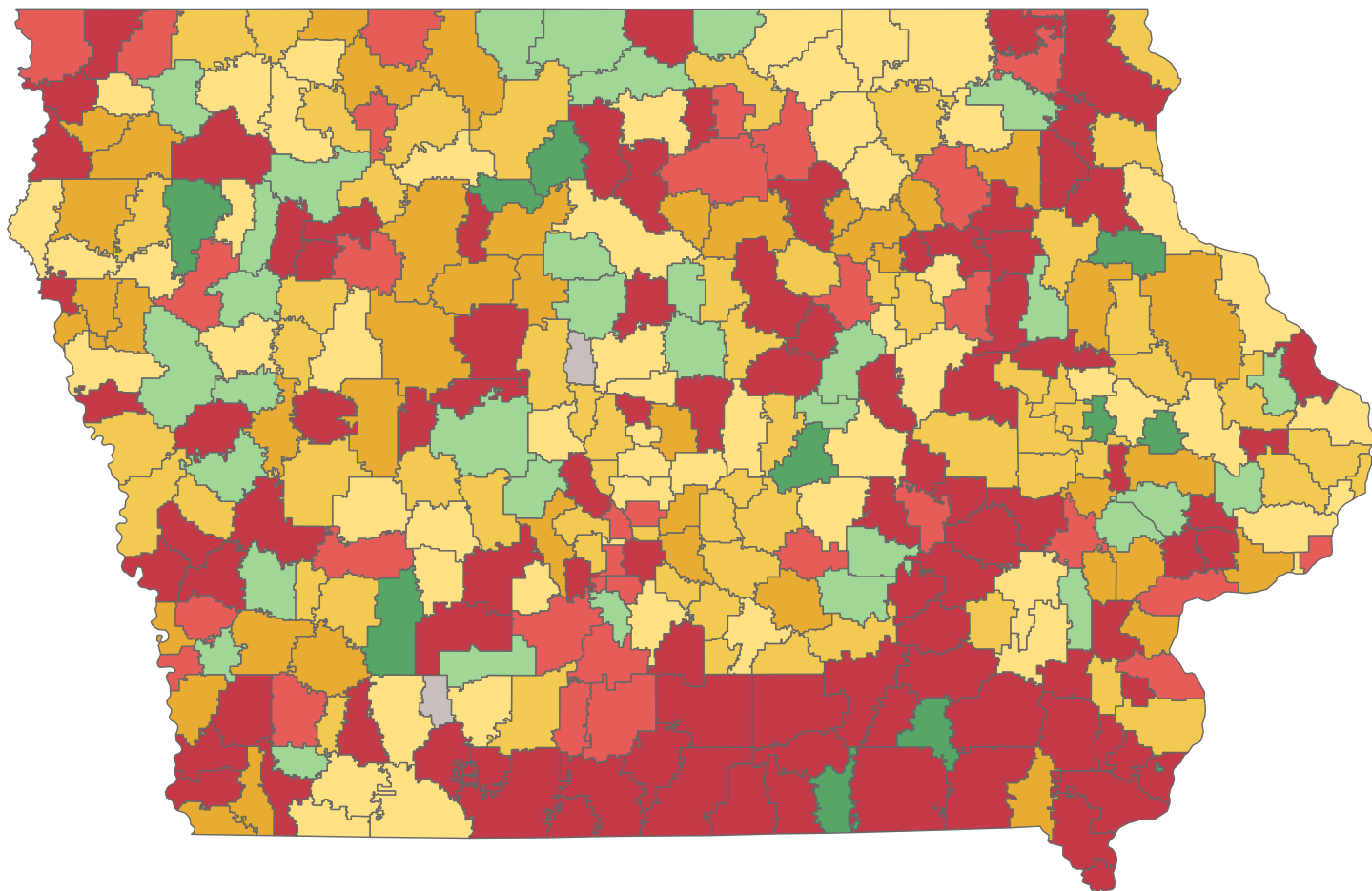


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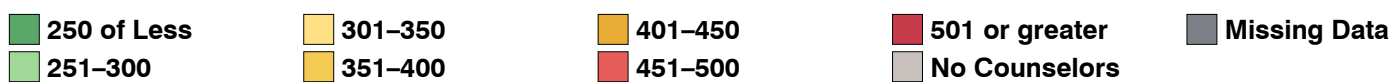




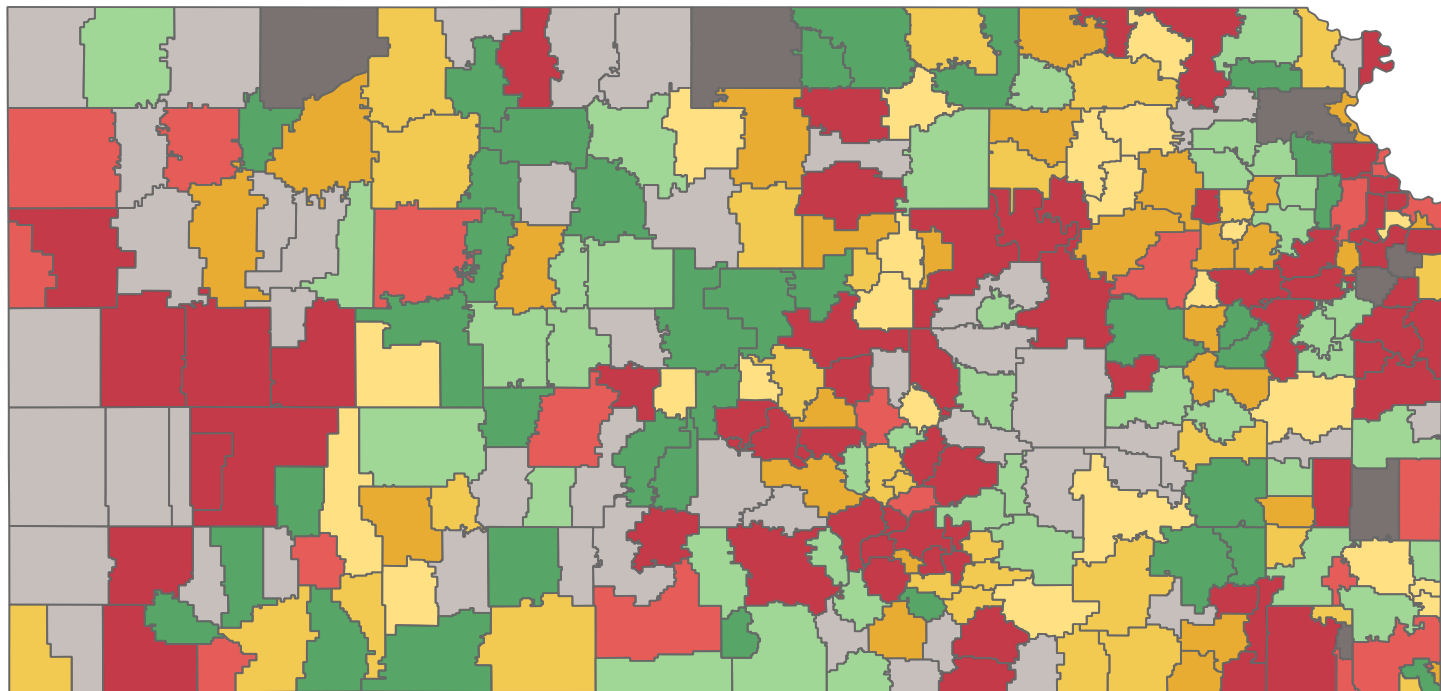
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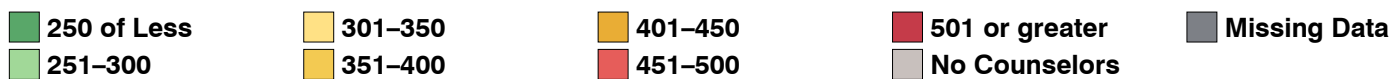
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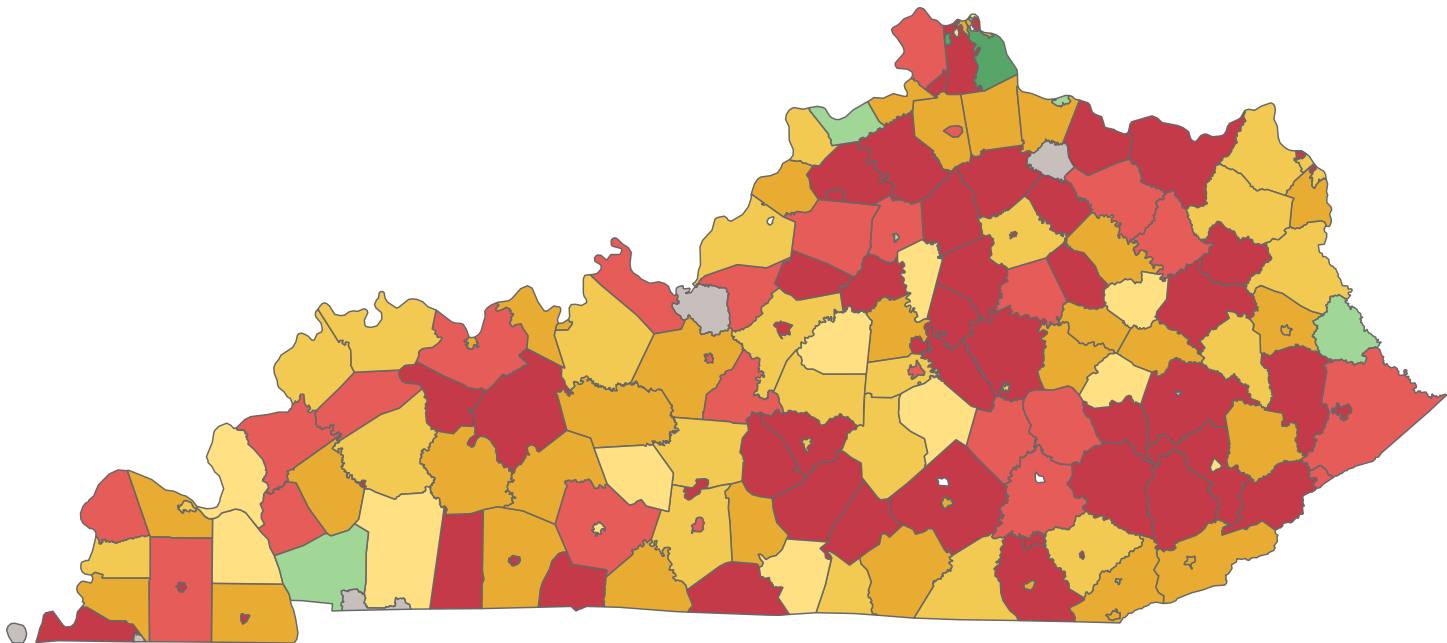
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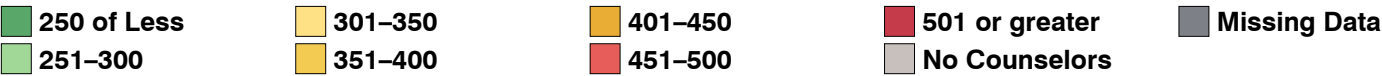
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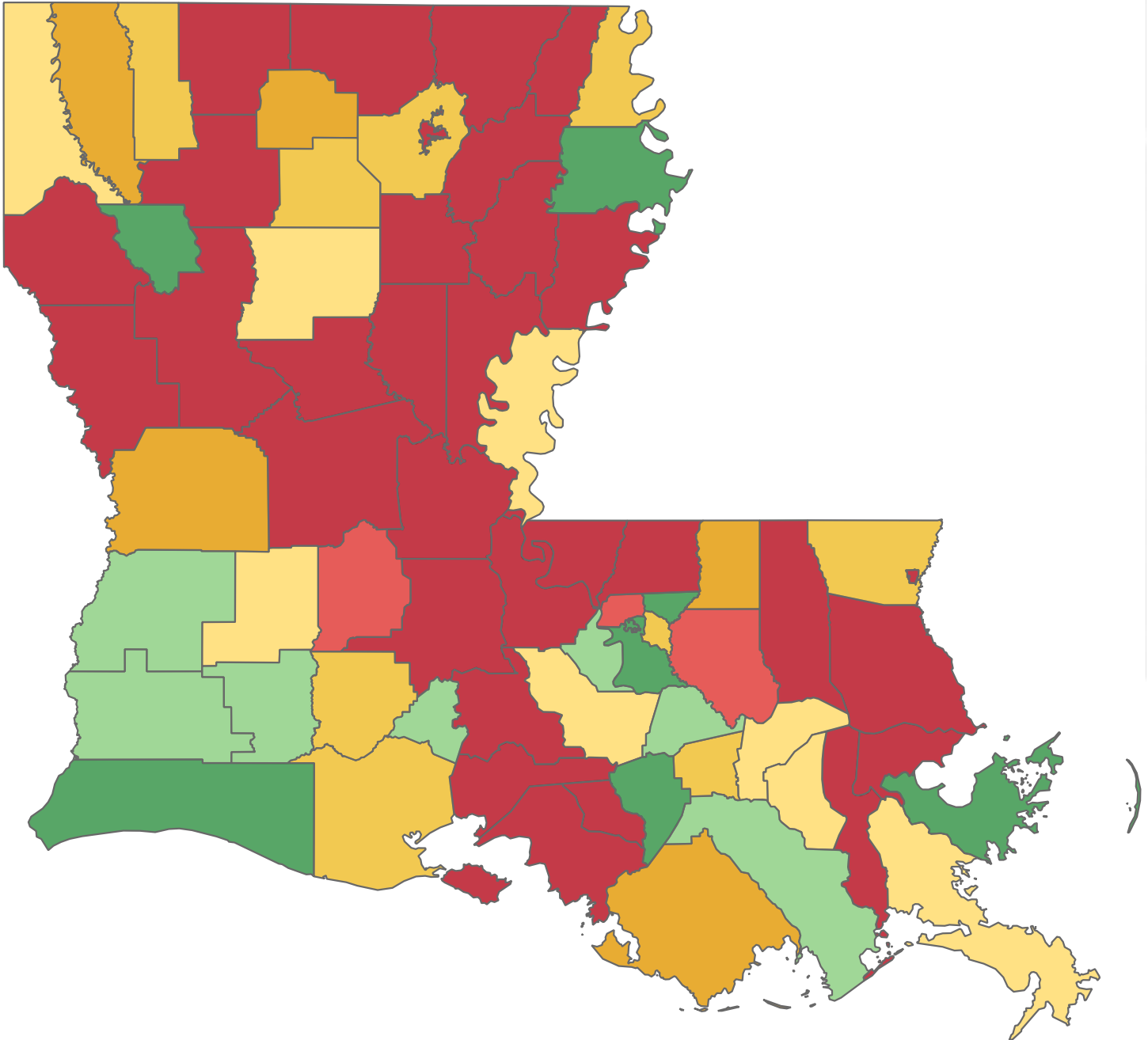
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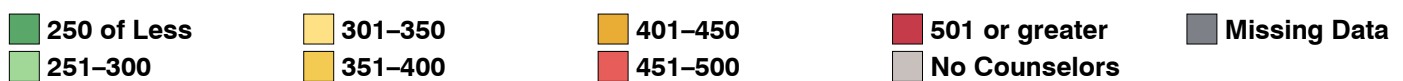
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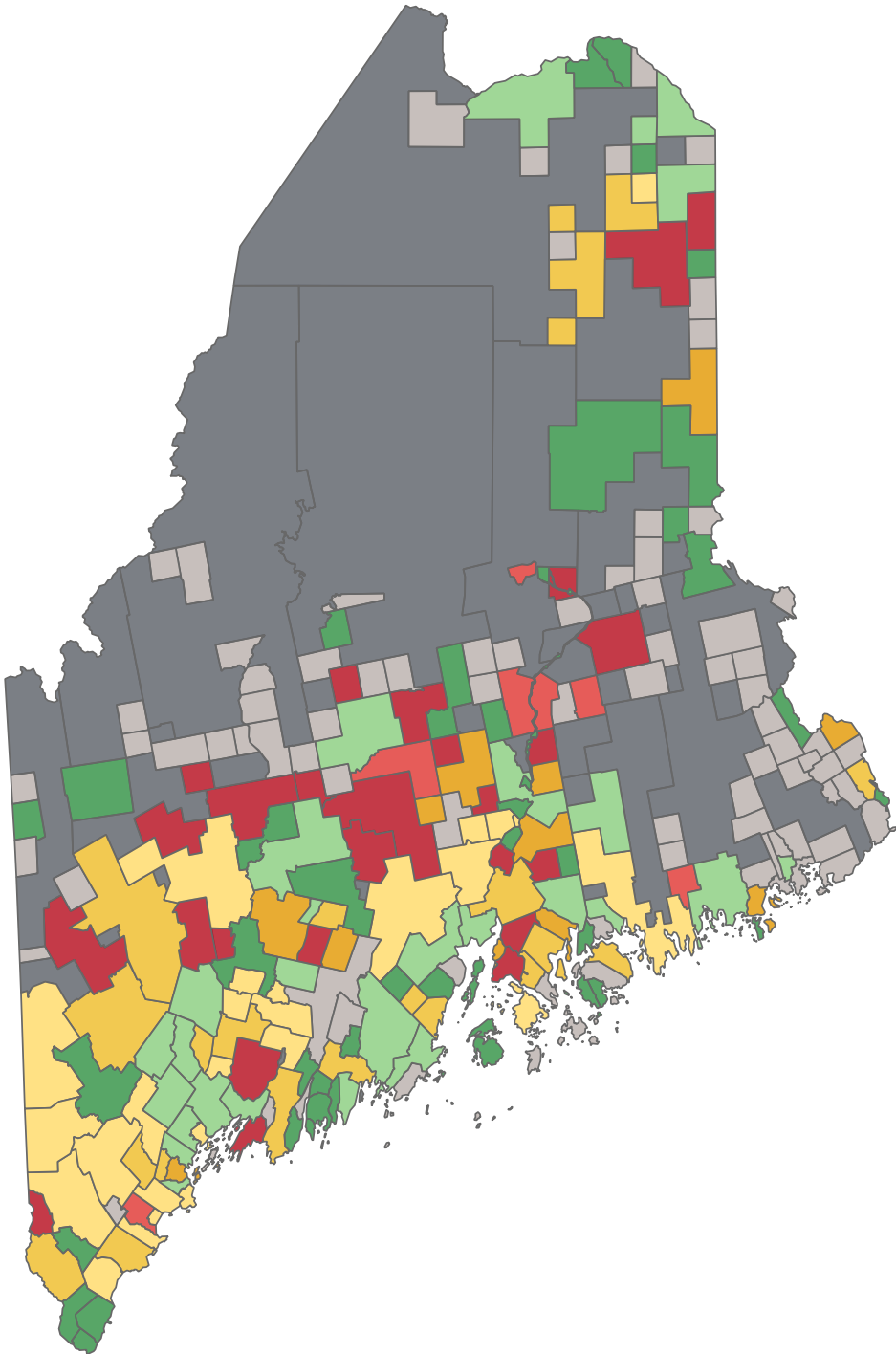
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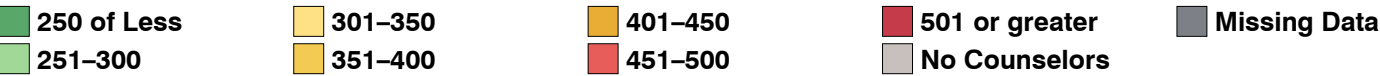
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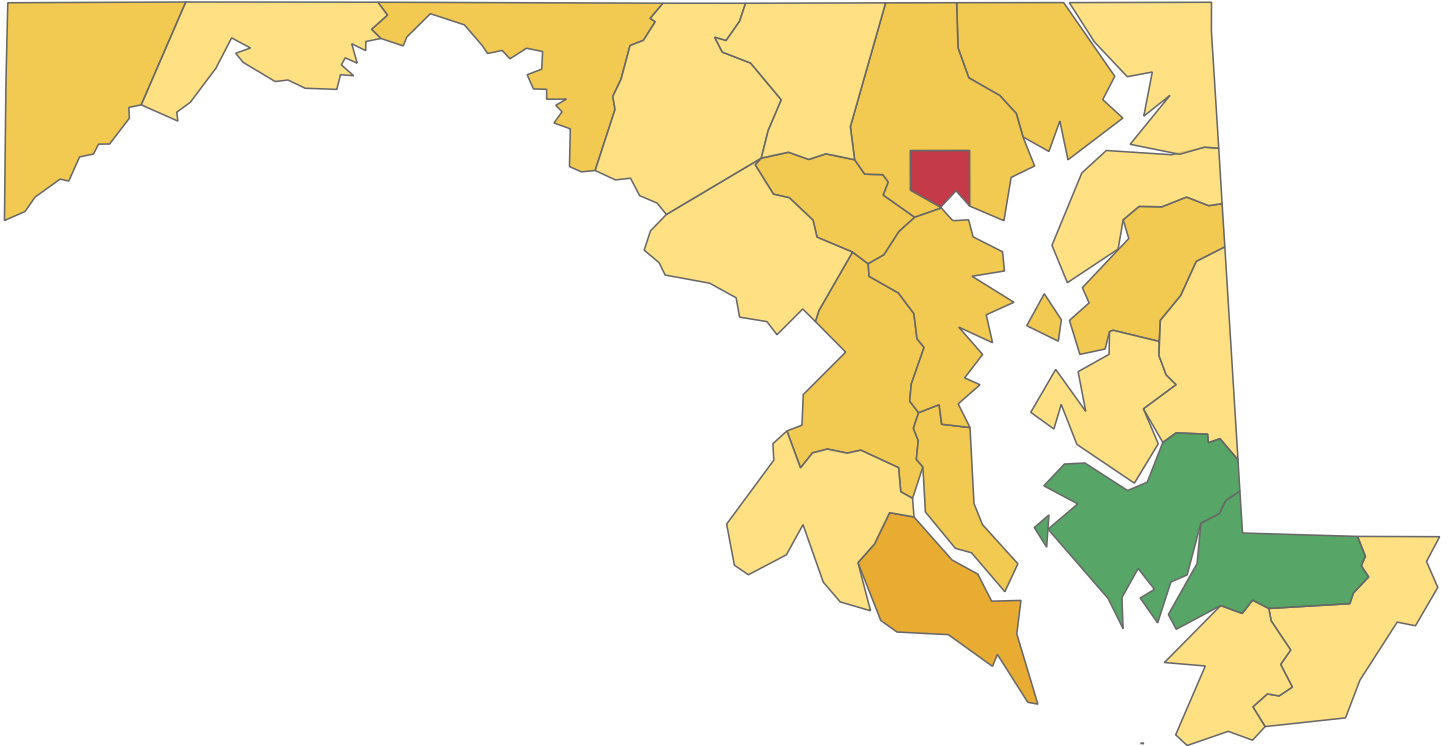
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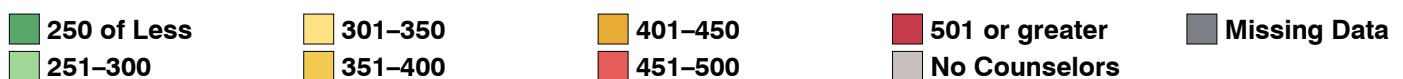
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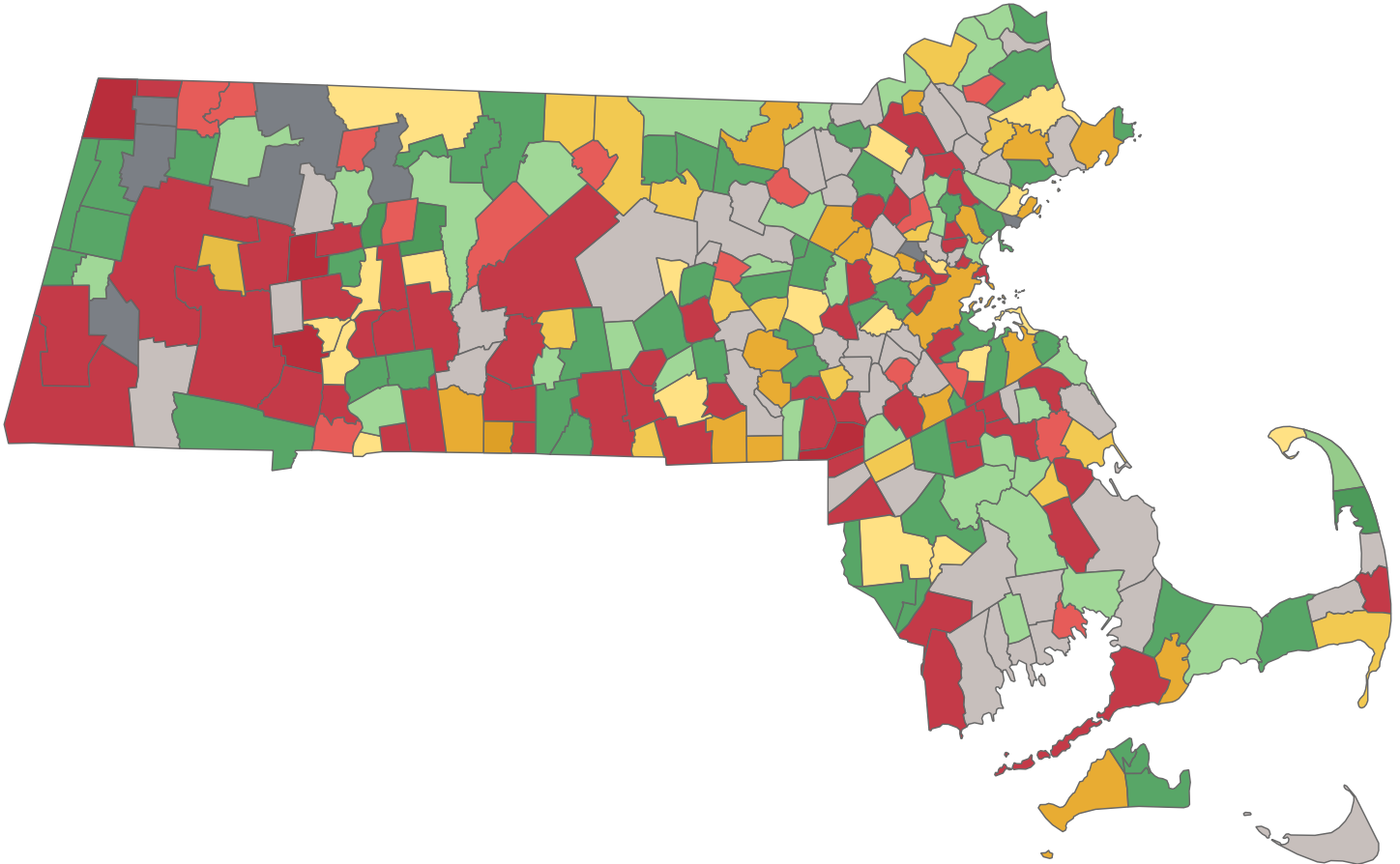
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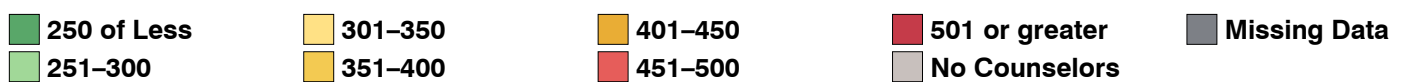
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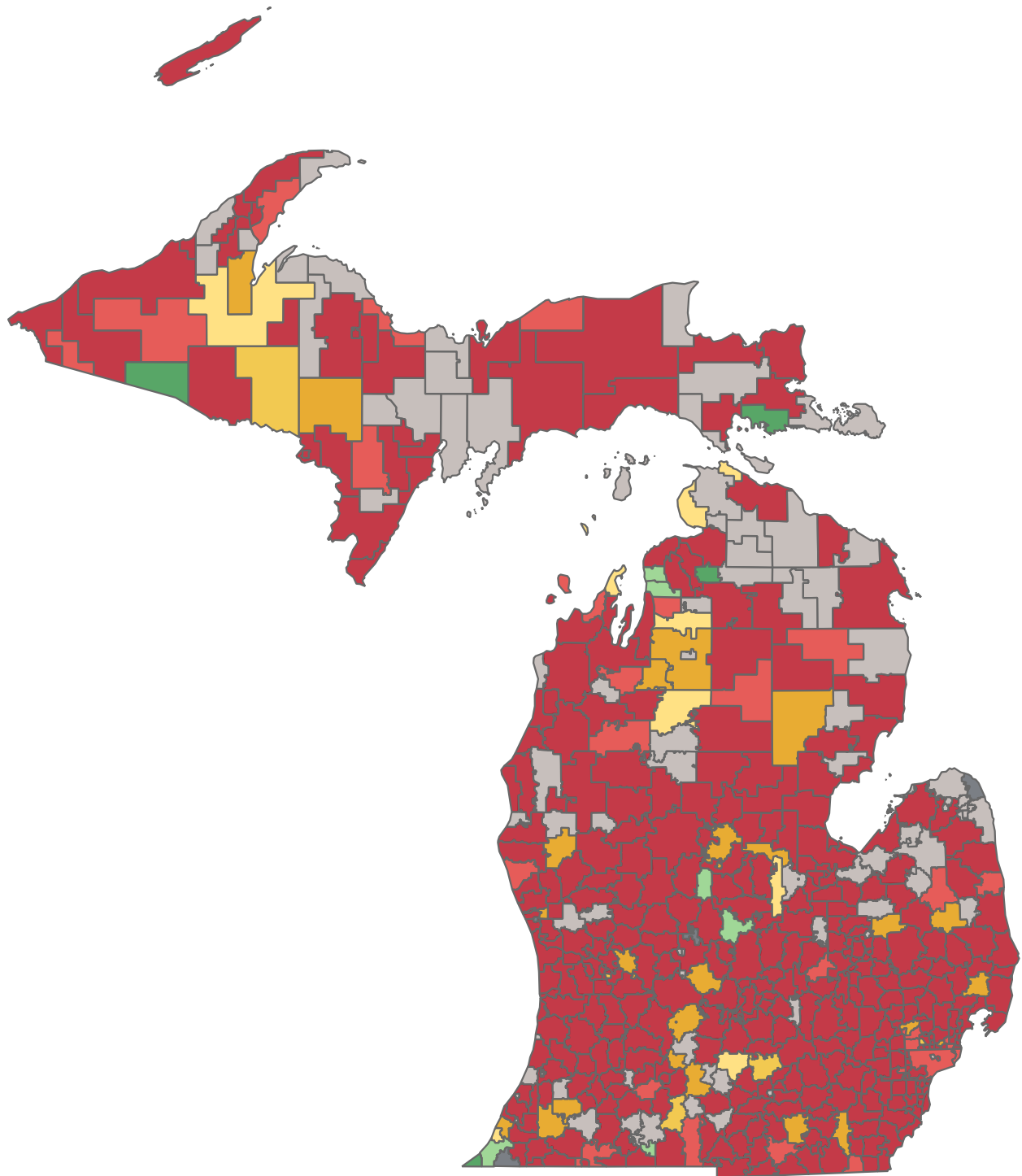


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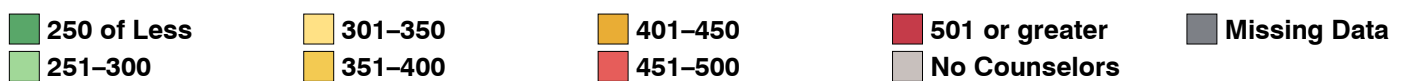




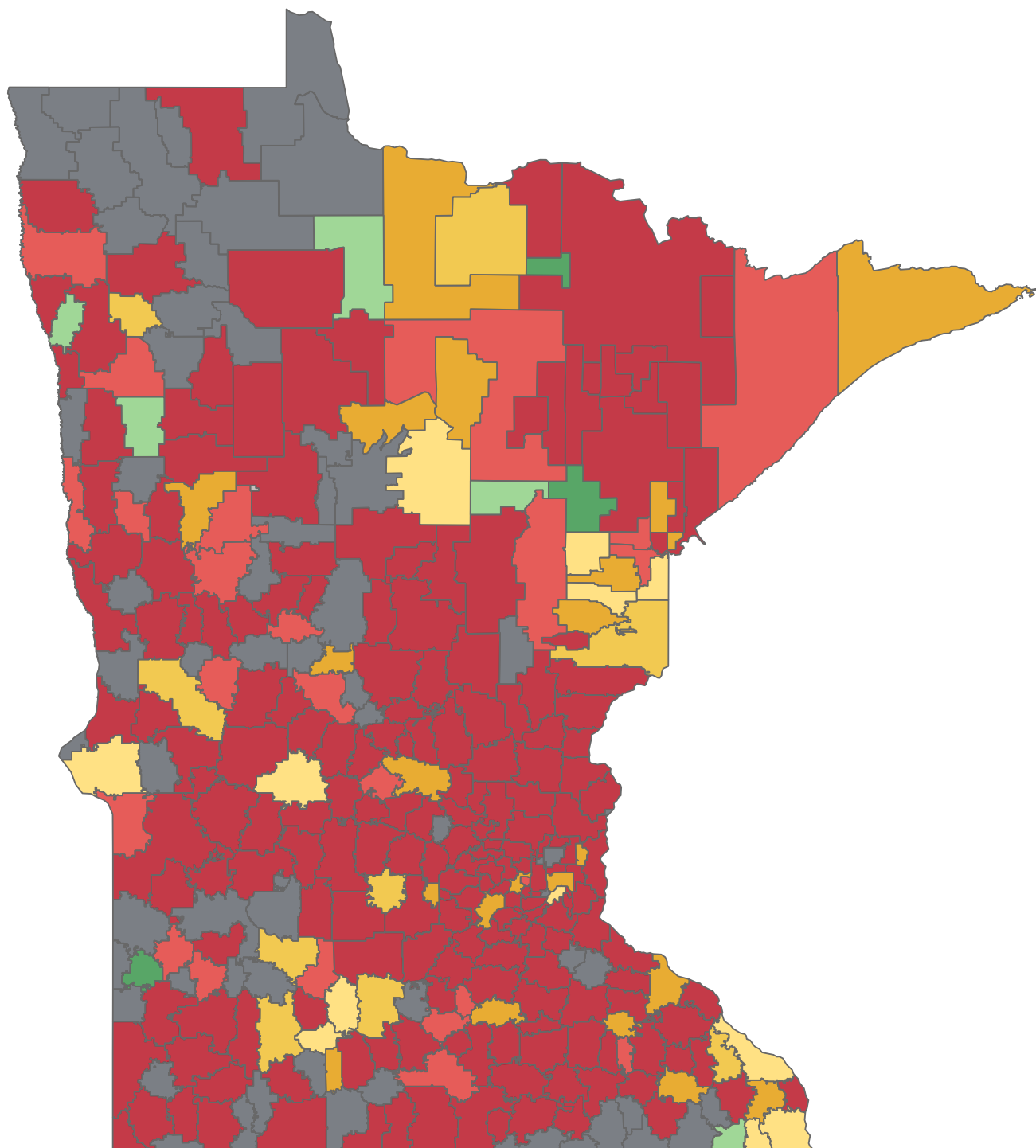
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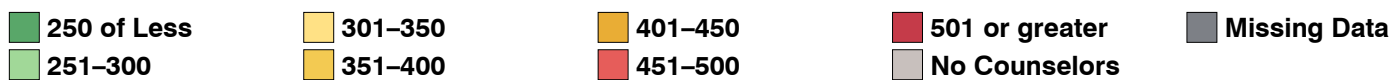
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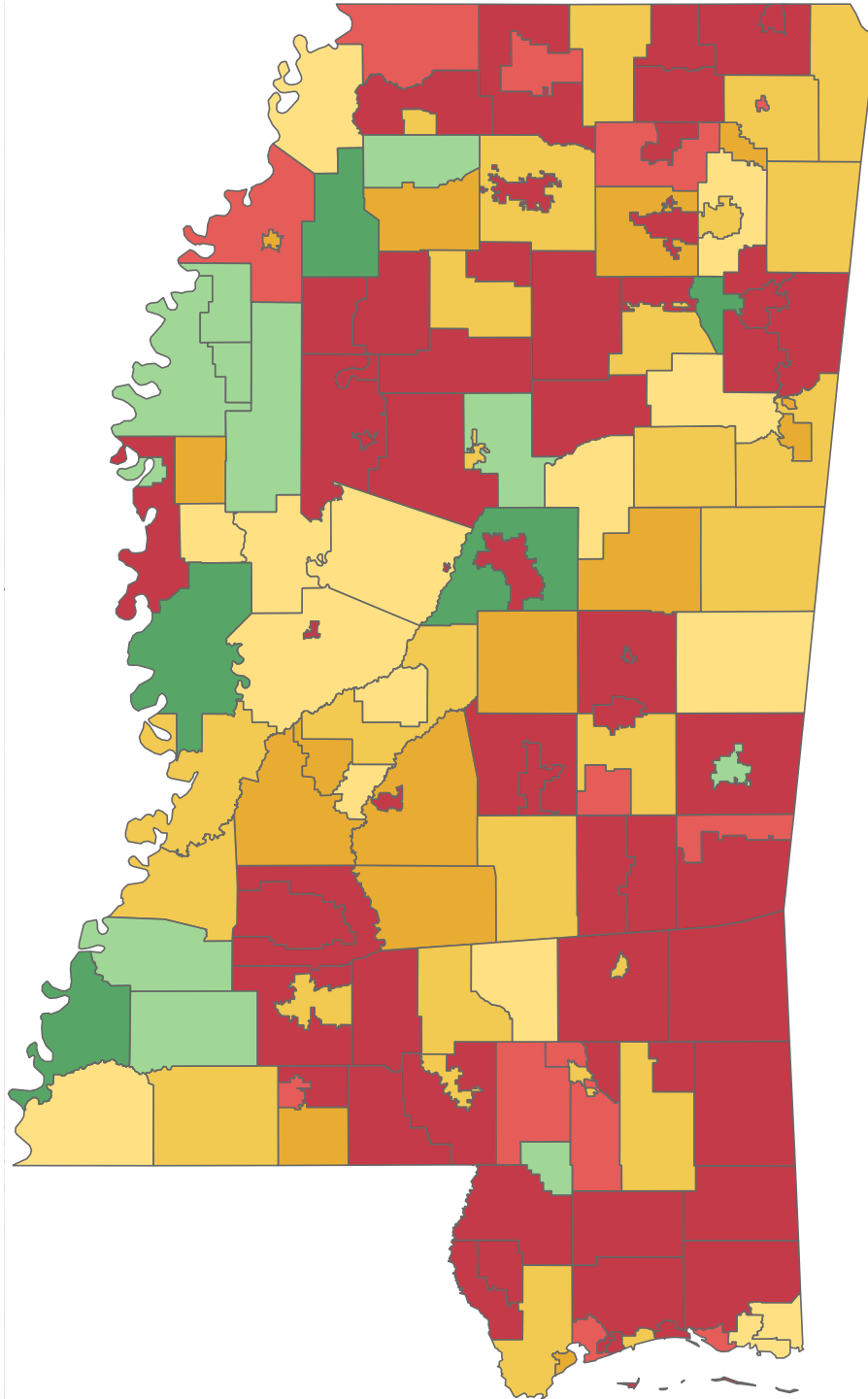
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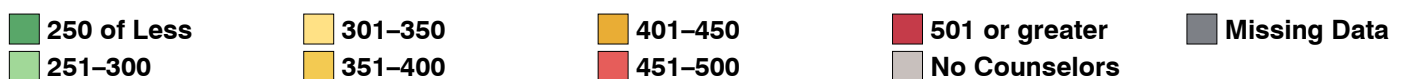
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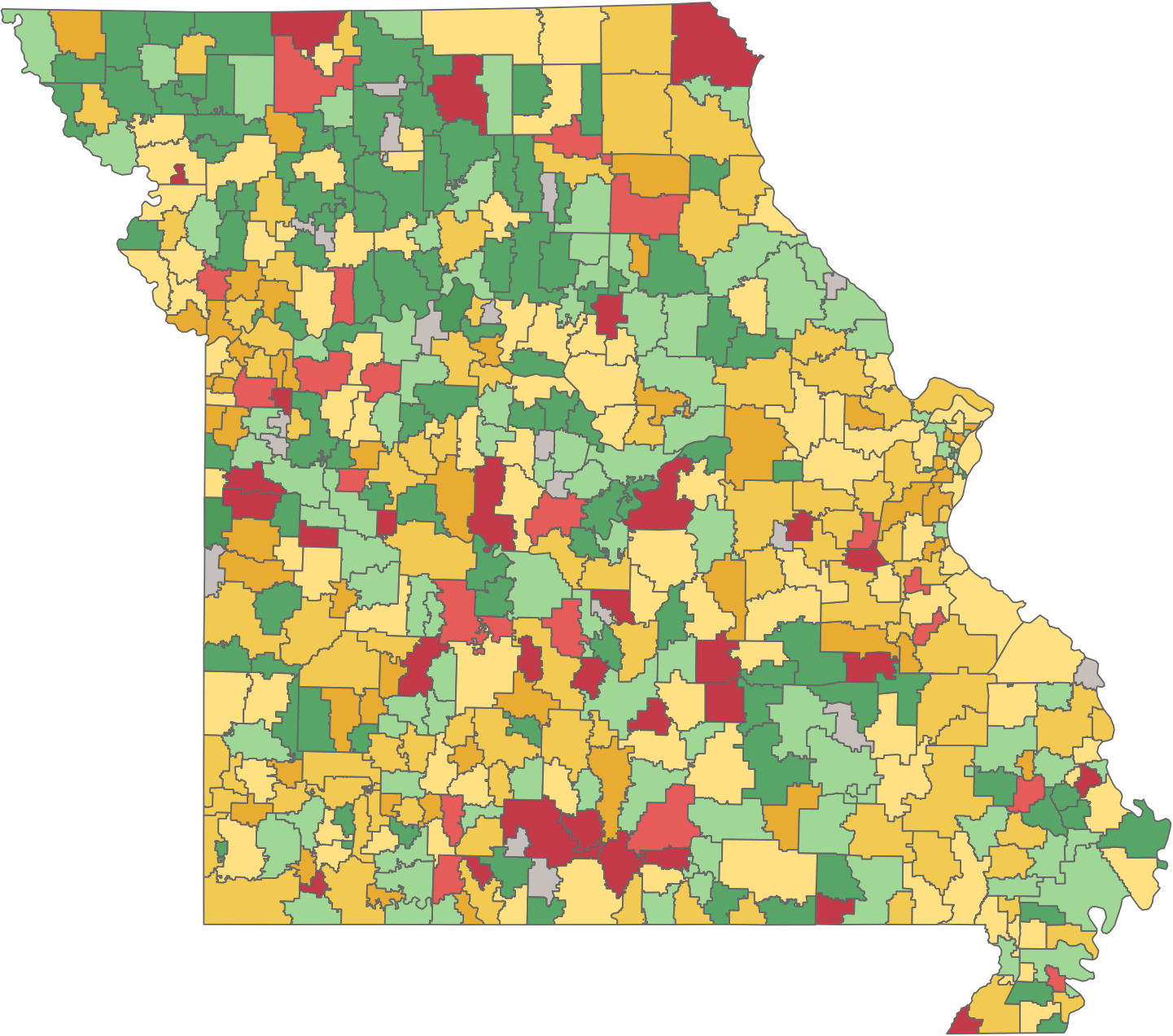
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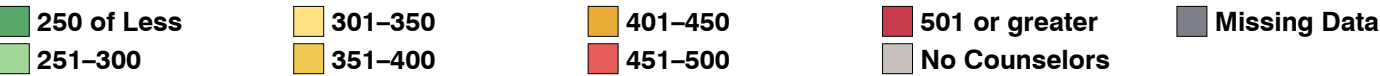
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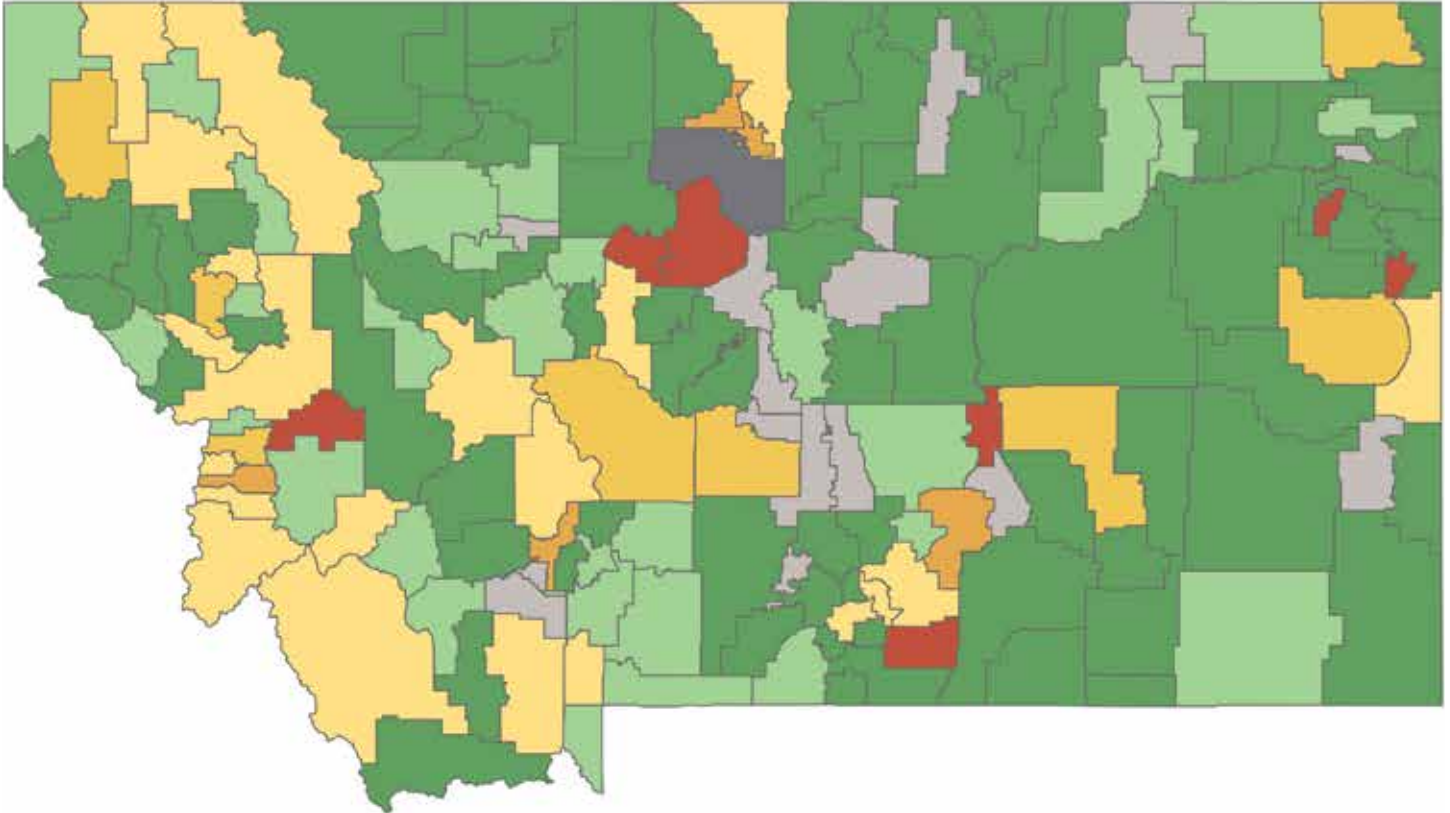
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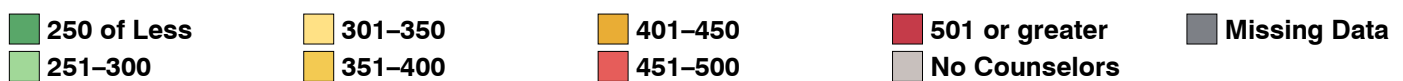
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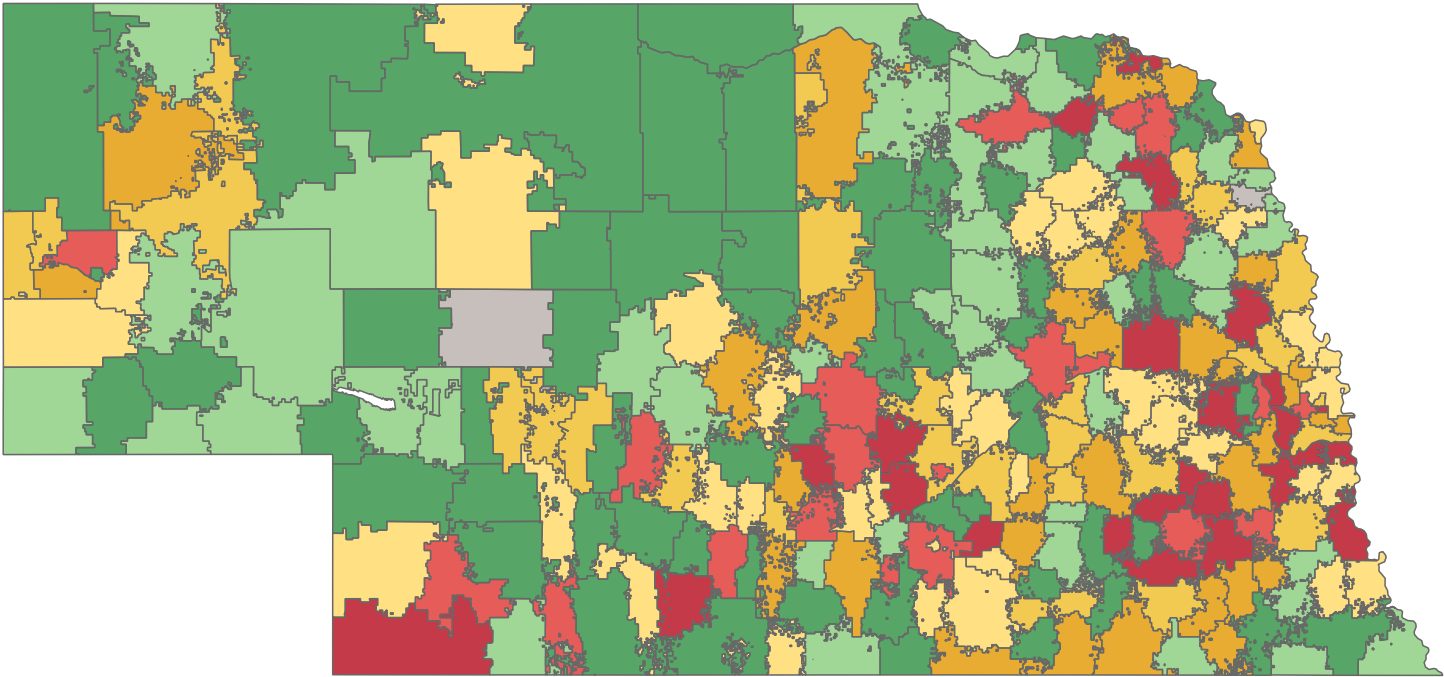
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## Counselor Ratio



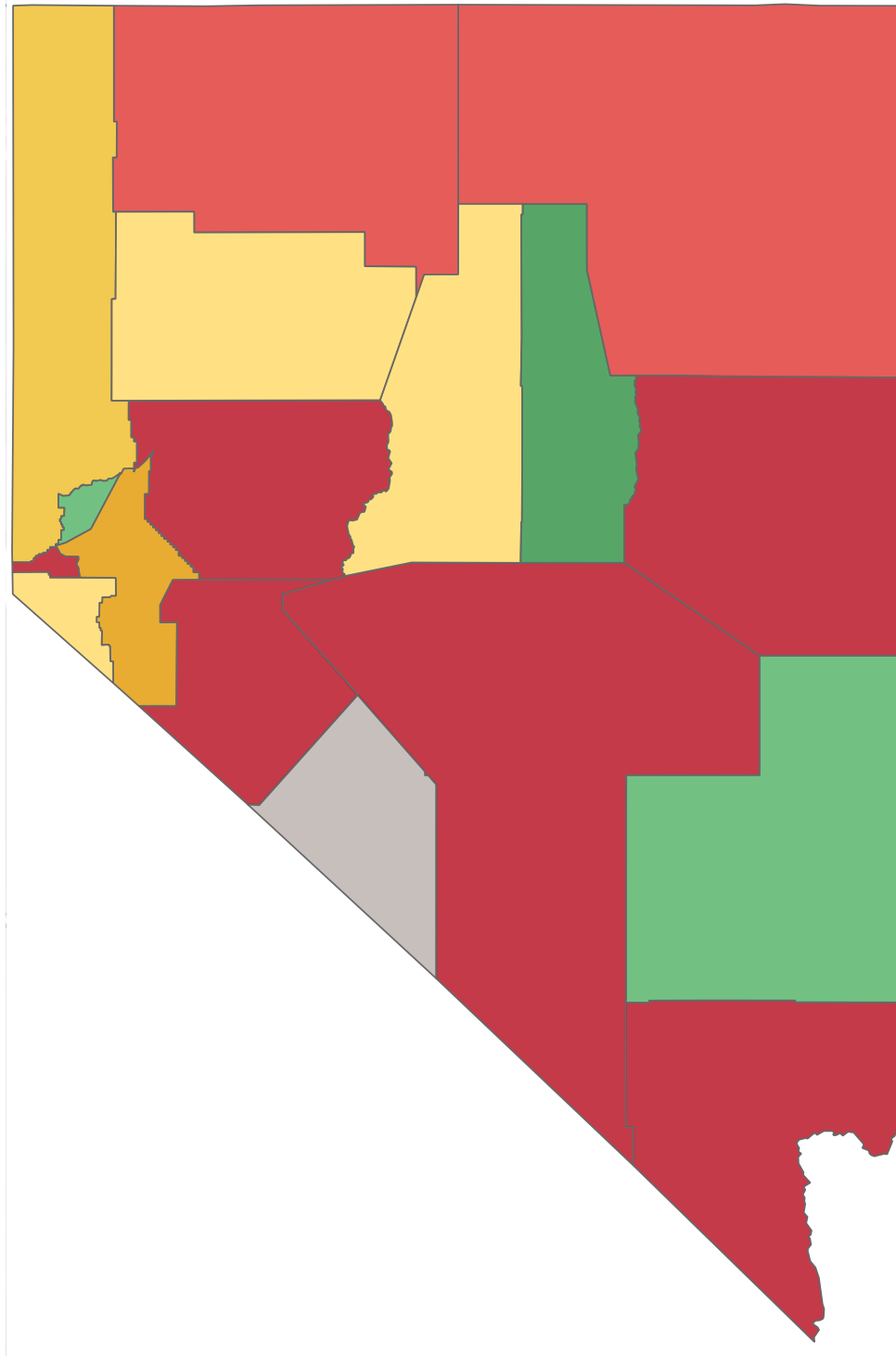
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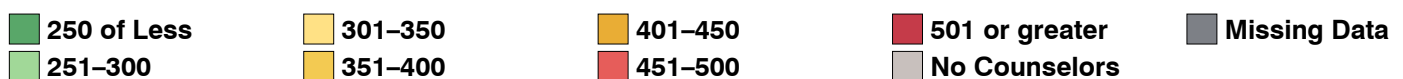
## Counselor Ratio

<div></div> 250 of Less	<div></div> 301–350	<div></div> 401–450	<div></div> 501 or greater	<div></div> Missing Data
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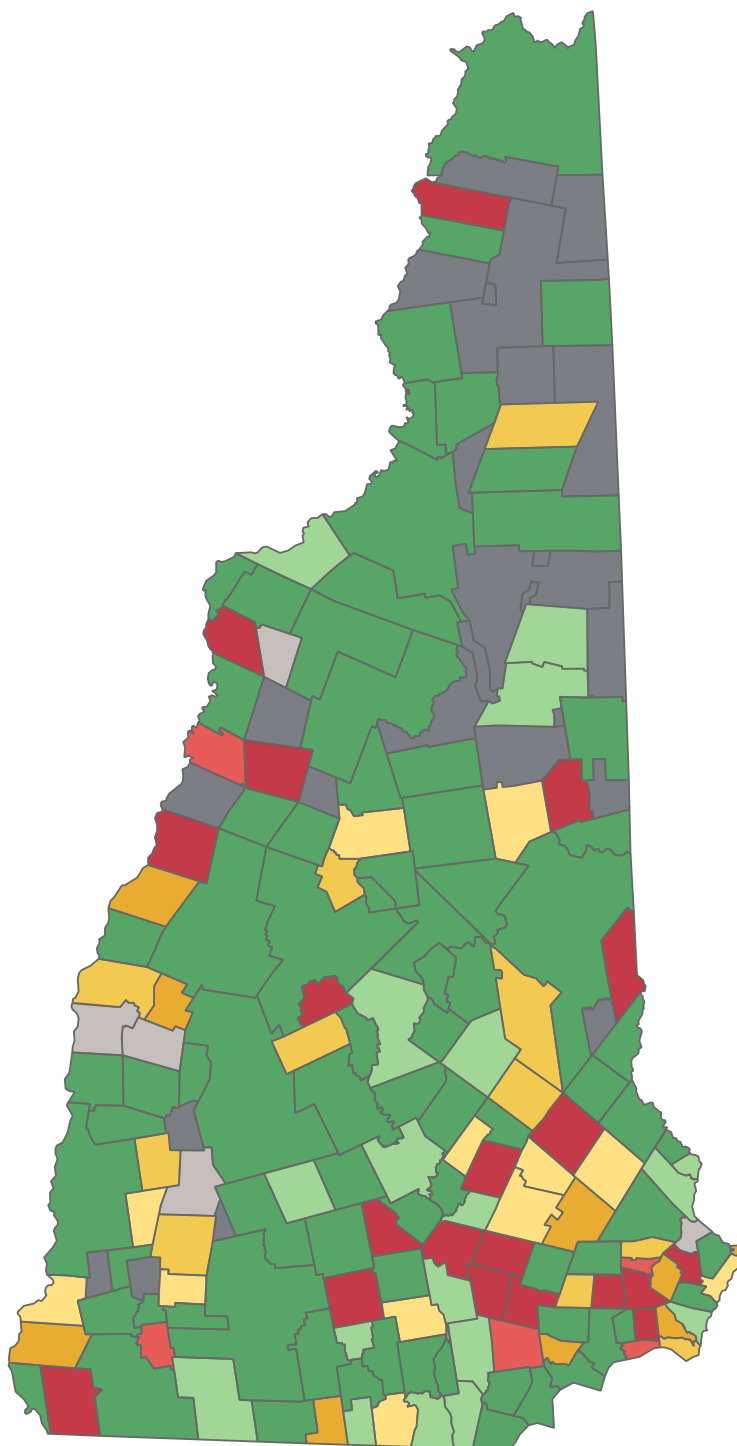


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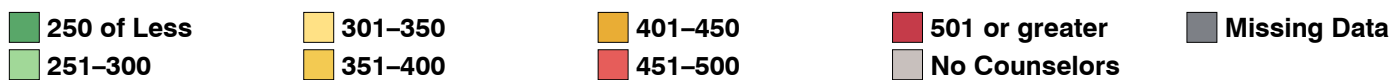




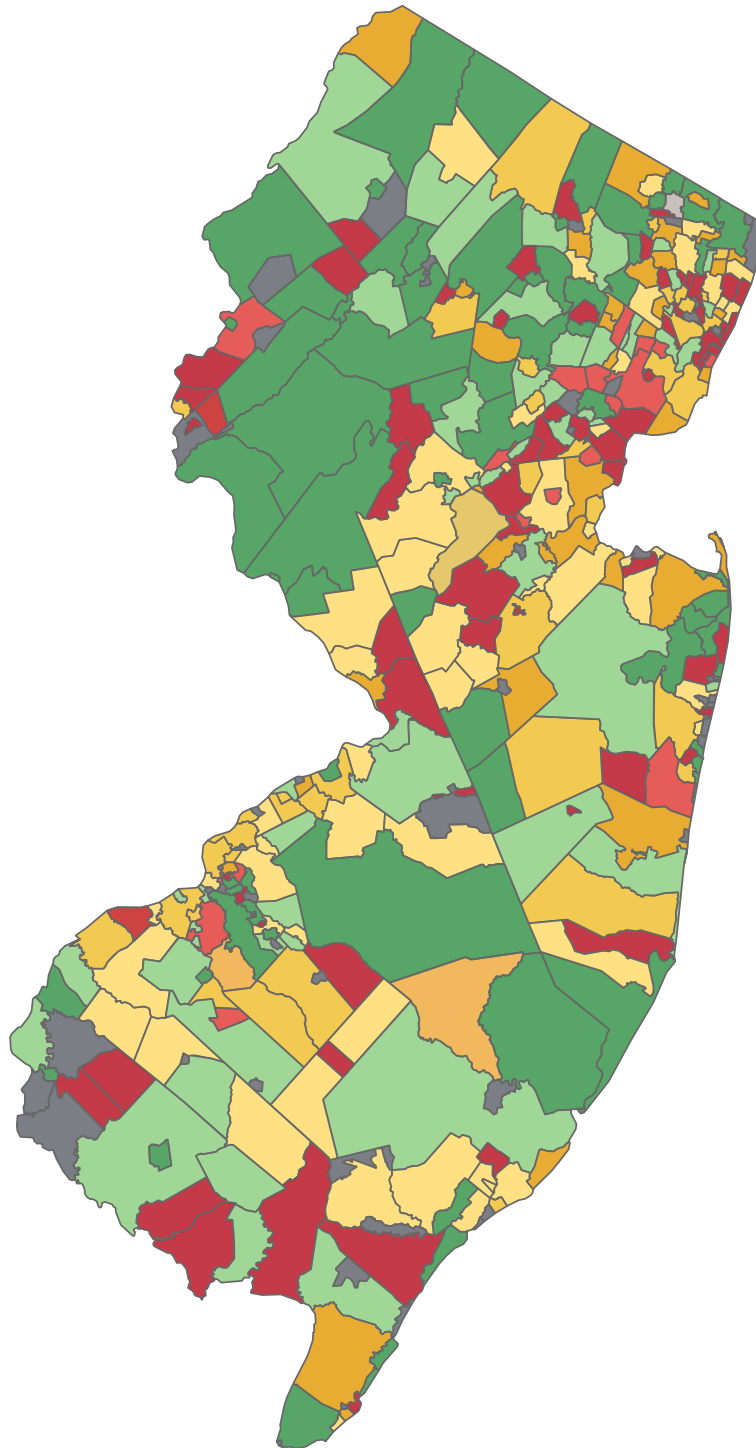
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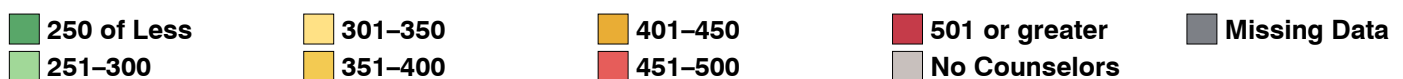
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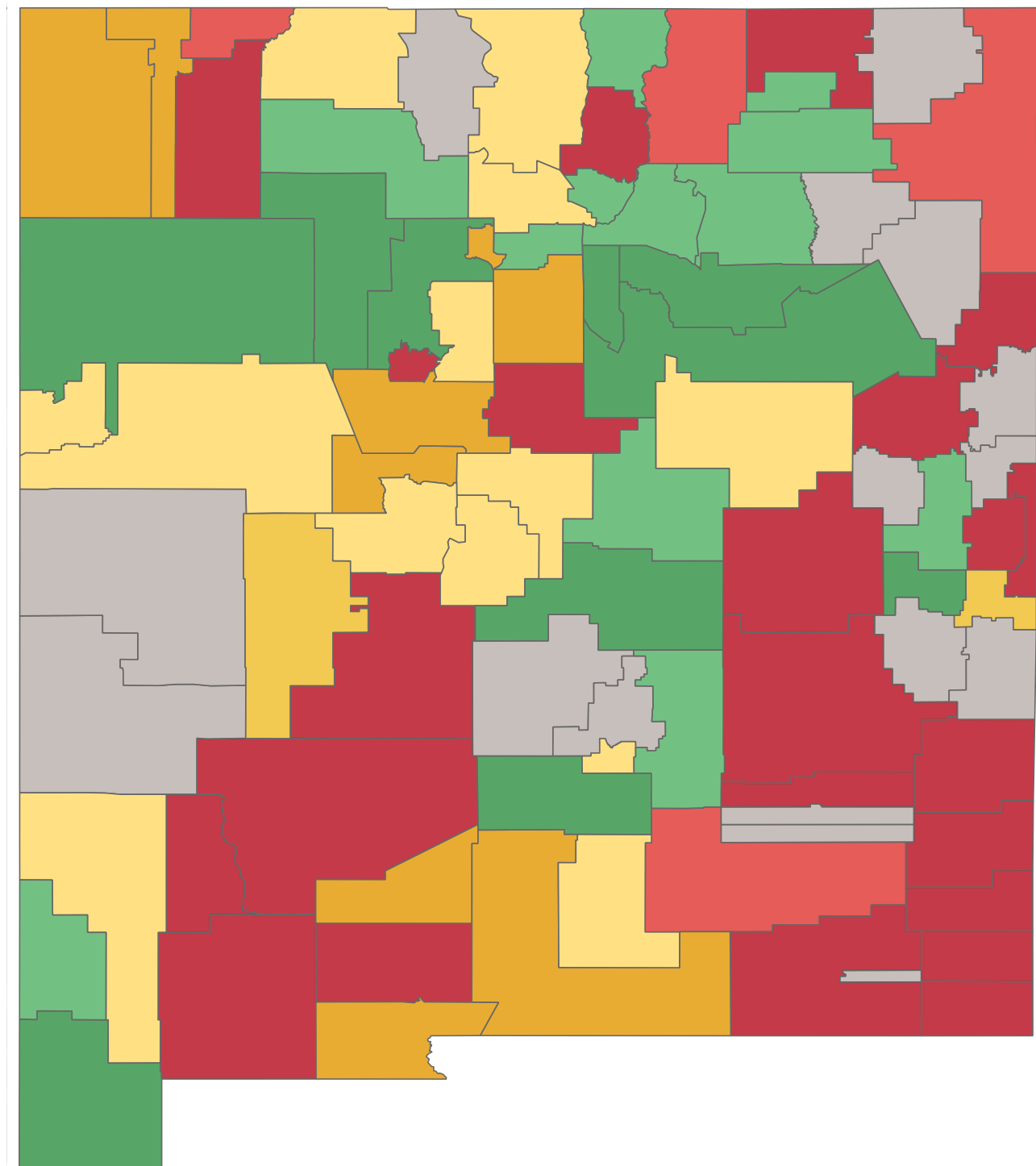
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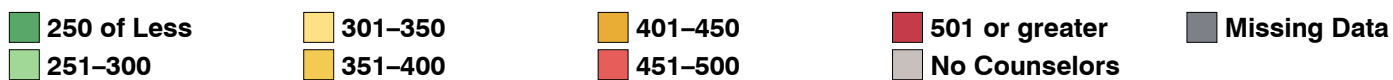
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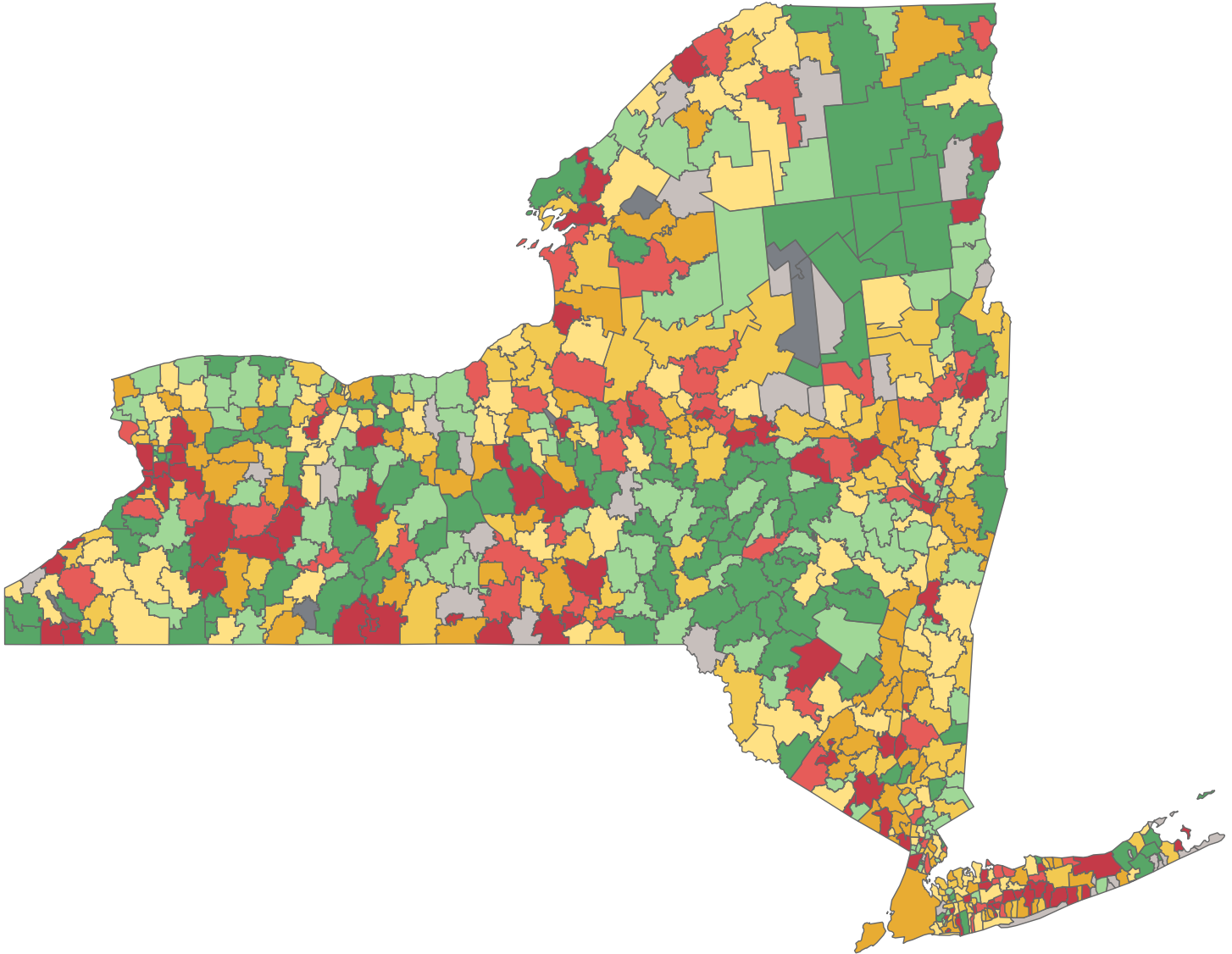
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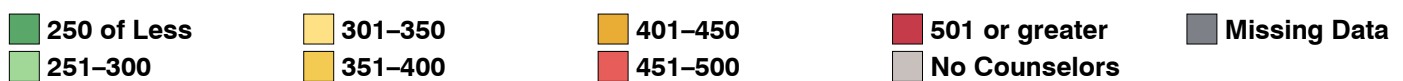
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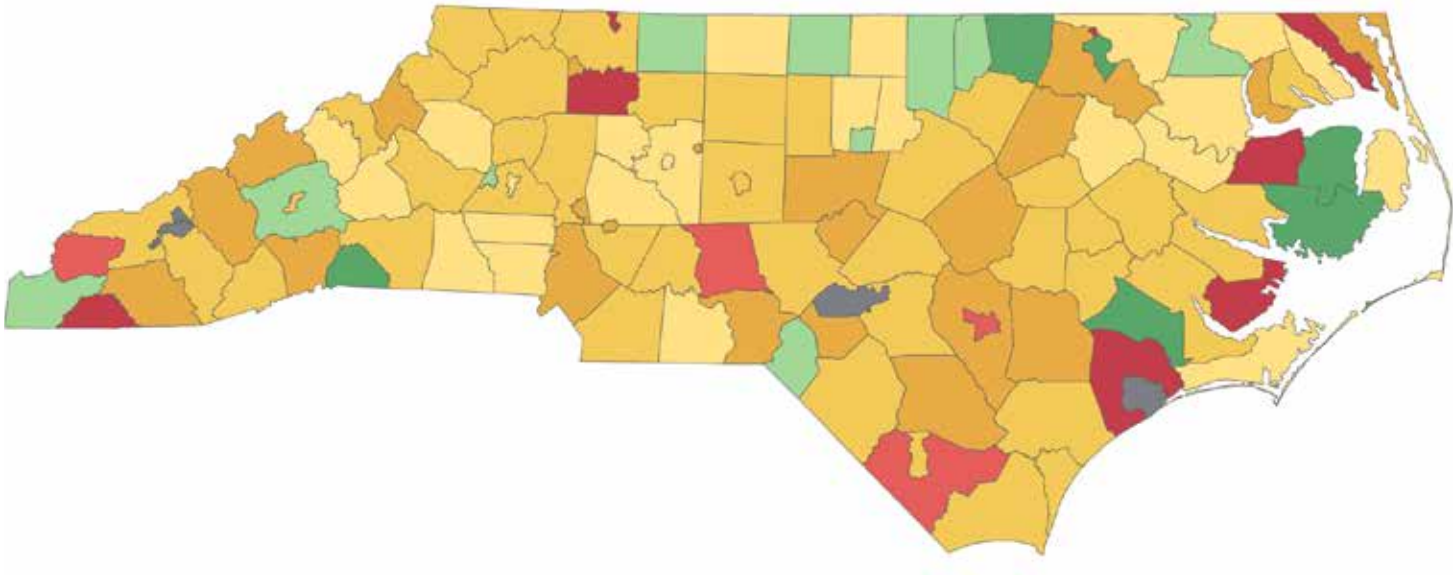
# New York



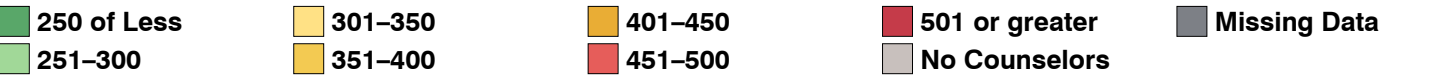
## Counselor Ratio



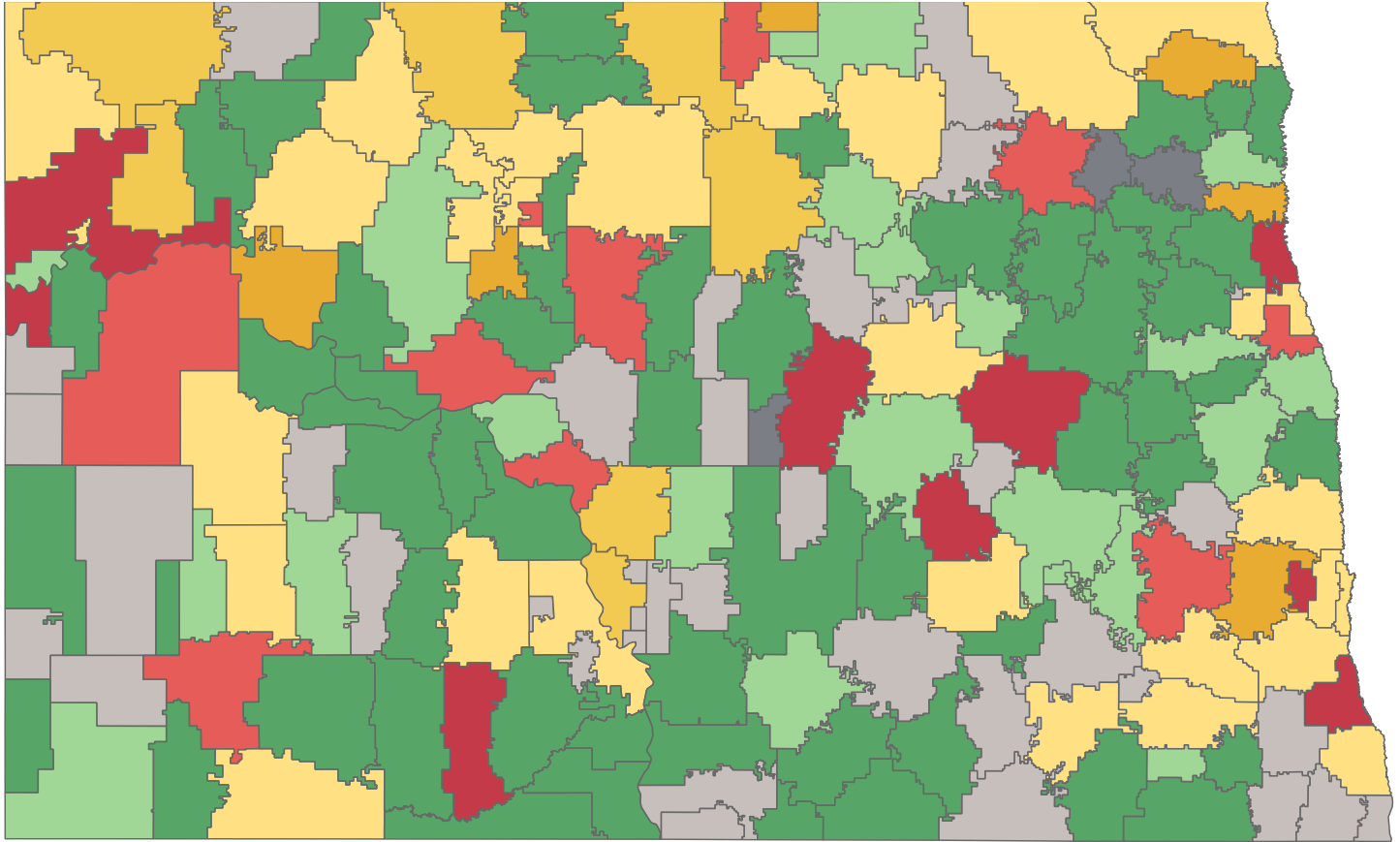
# North Carolina



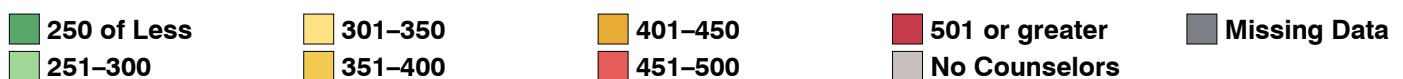
## Counselor Ratio



# North Dakota



## Counselor Ratio



# Ohio



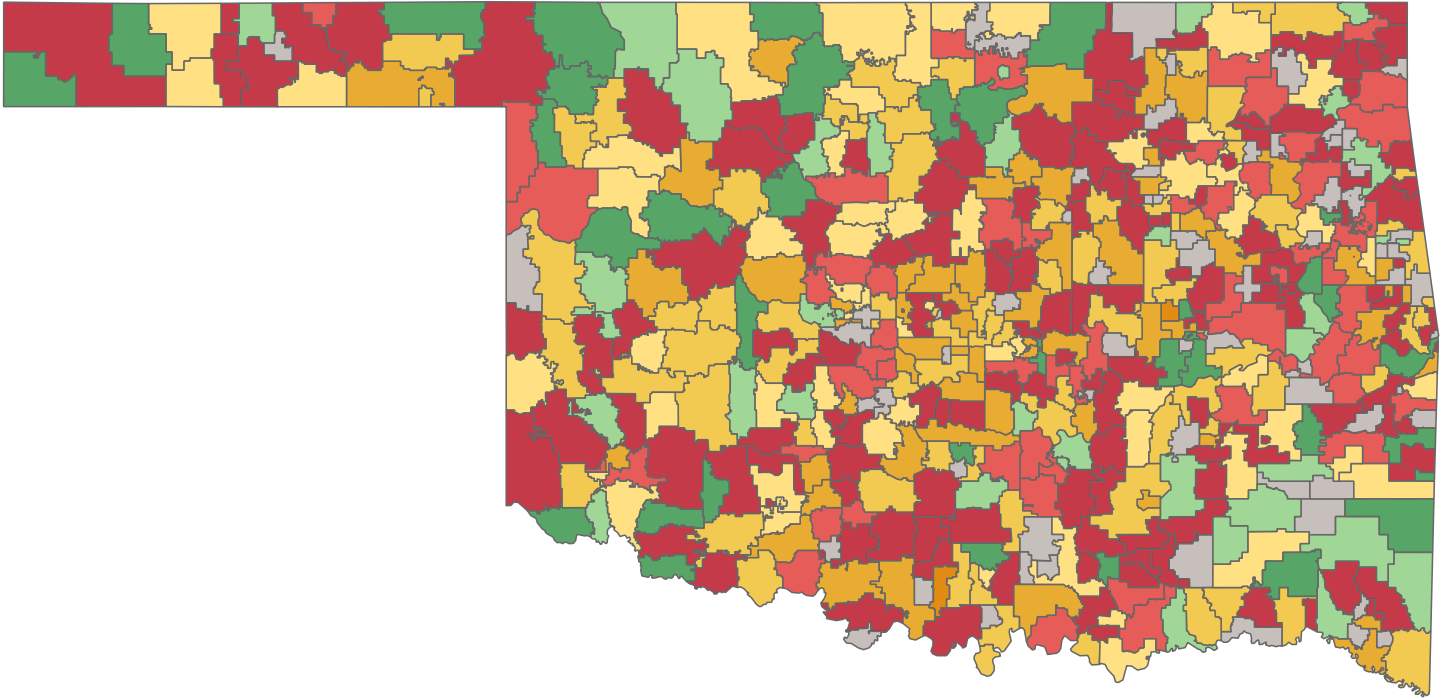
NOTE: A reliable school district map could not be created due to repeated school district names. School district-level ratios are presented in tabular format on NACAC’s Tableau Public site.

## Counselor Ratio

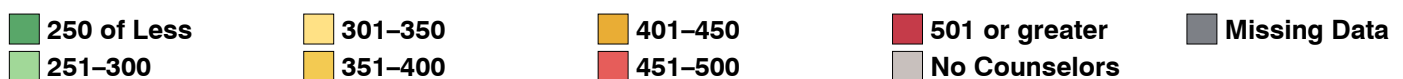
<div></div> 250 of Less	<div></div> 301–350	<div></div> 401–450	<div></div> 501 or greater	<div></div> Missing Data
<div></div> 251–300	<div></div> 351–400	<div></div> 451–500	<div></div> No Counselors	



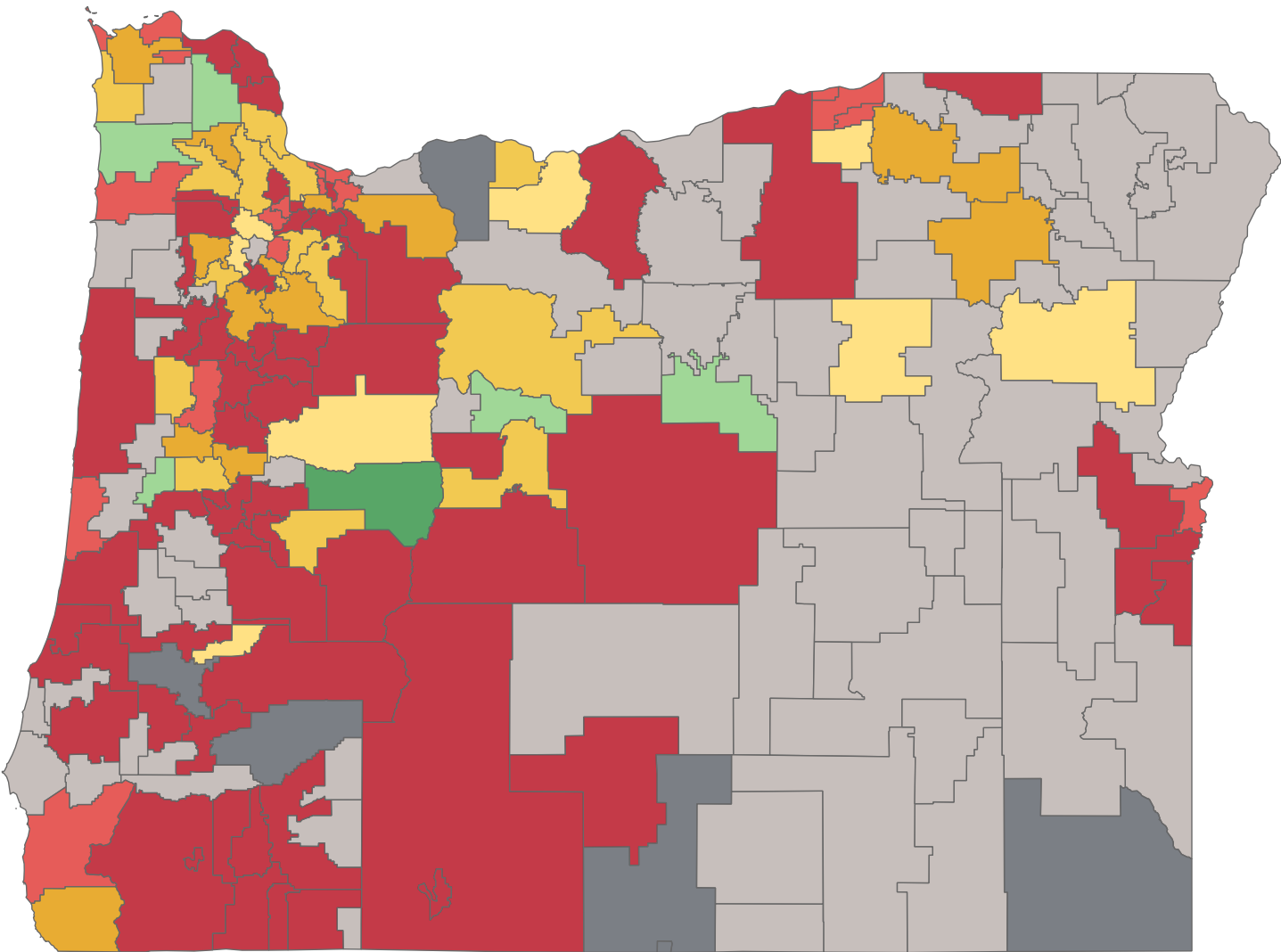
# Oklahoma



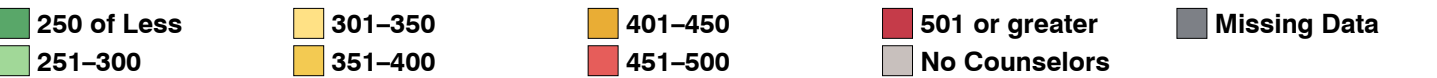
## Counselor Ratio



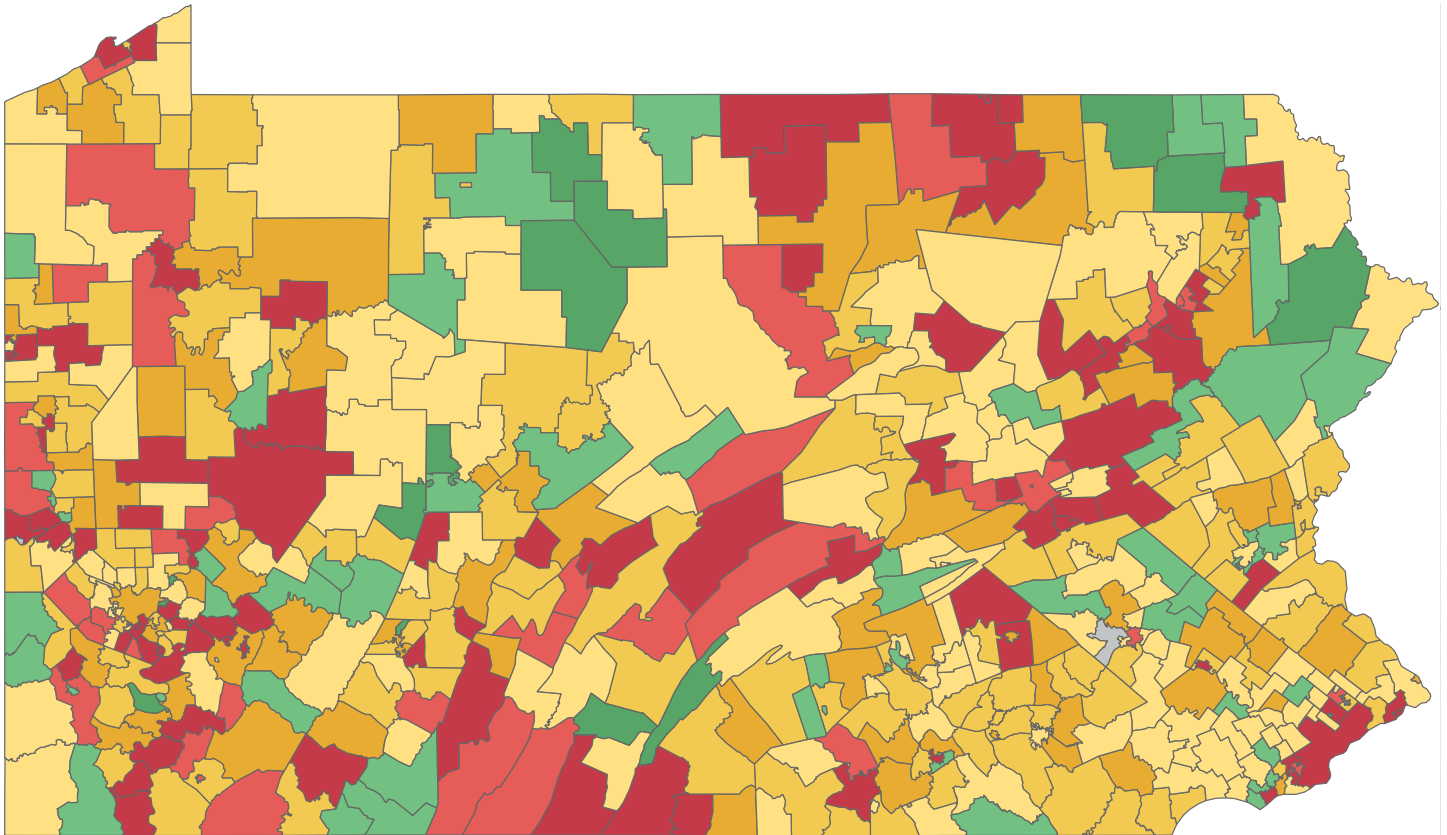
# Oregon



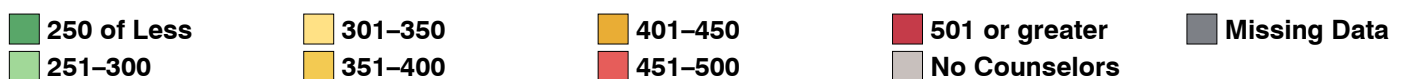
## Counselor Ratio



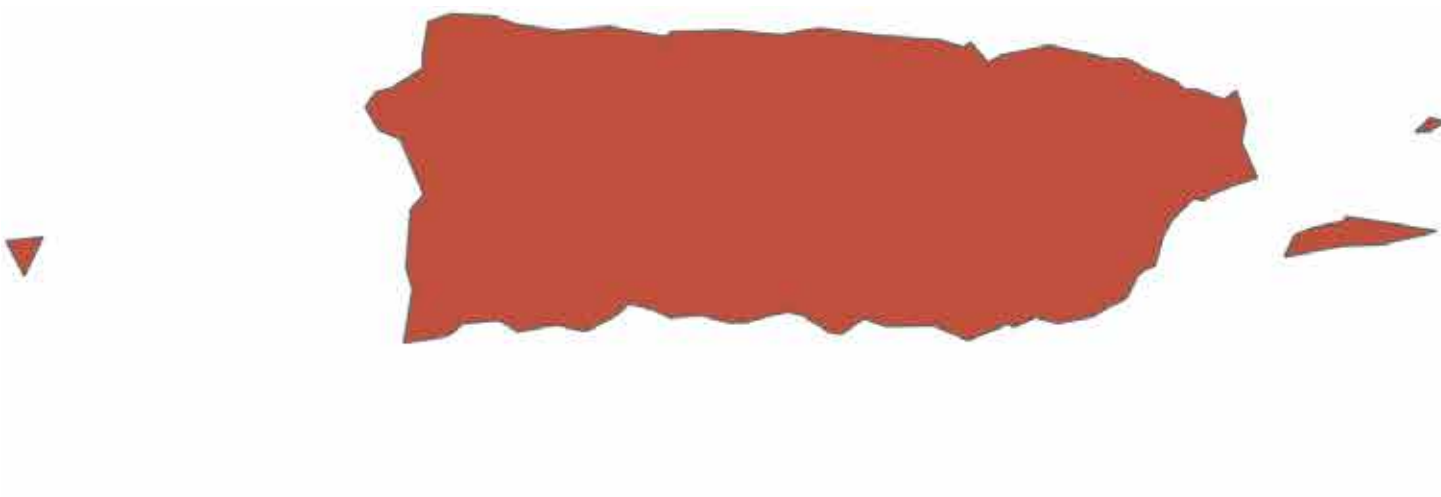
# Pennsylvania



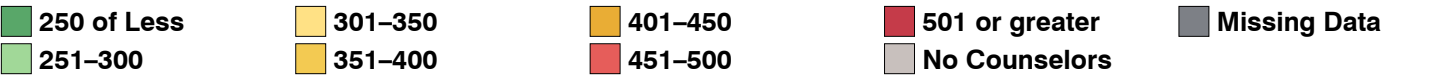
## Counselor Ratio



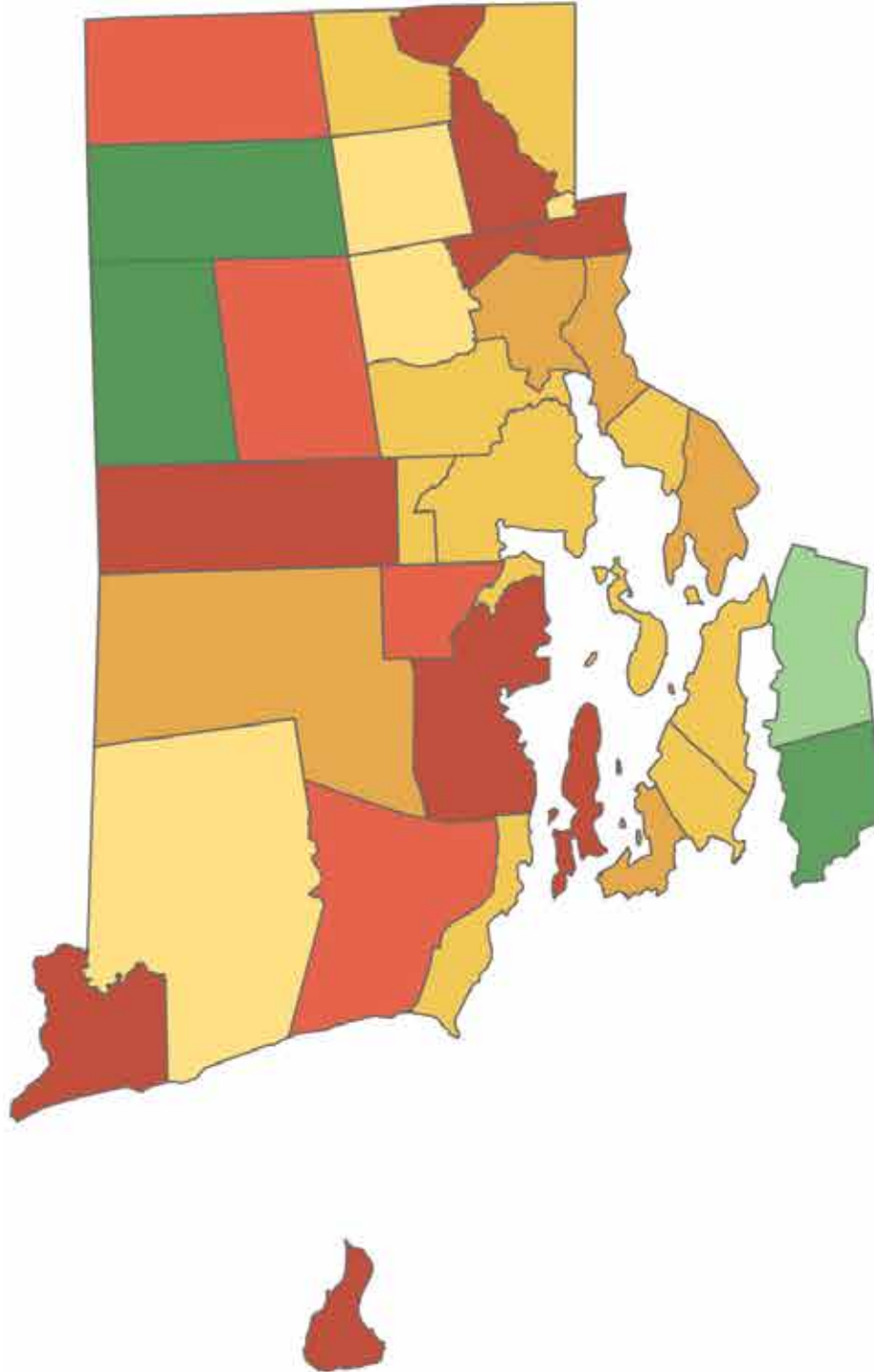
# Puerto Rico



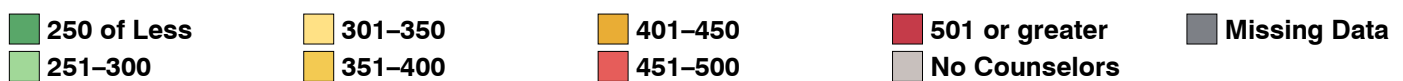
## Counselor Ratio



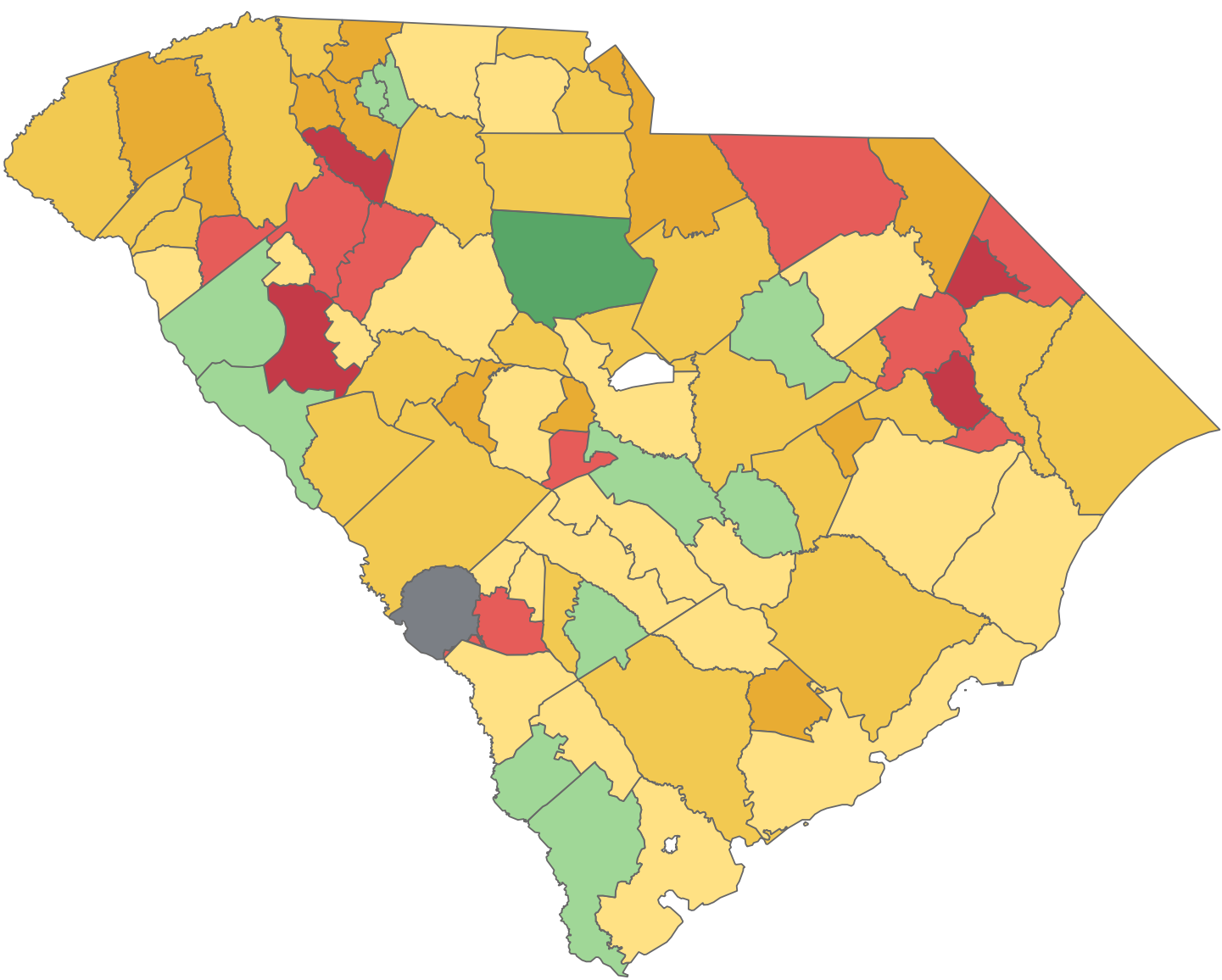
# Rhode Island



## Counselor Ratio



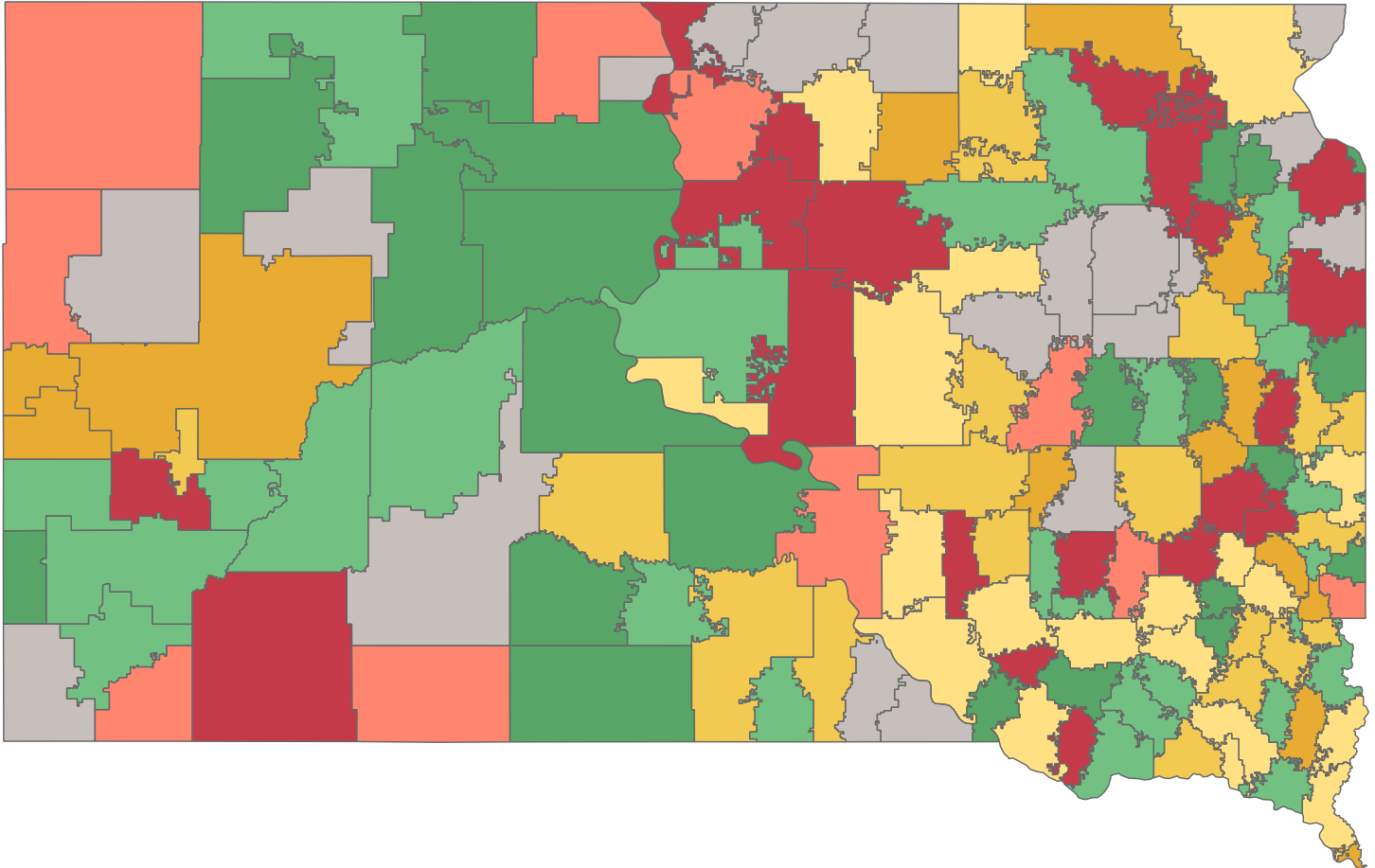
# South Carolina



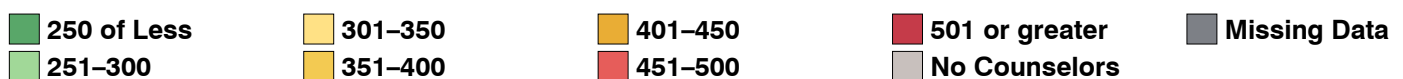
## Counselor Ratio

250 of Less	301–350	401–450	501 or greater	Missing Data
251–300	351–400	451–500	No Counselors	

# South Dakota

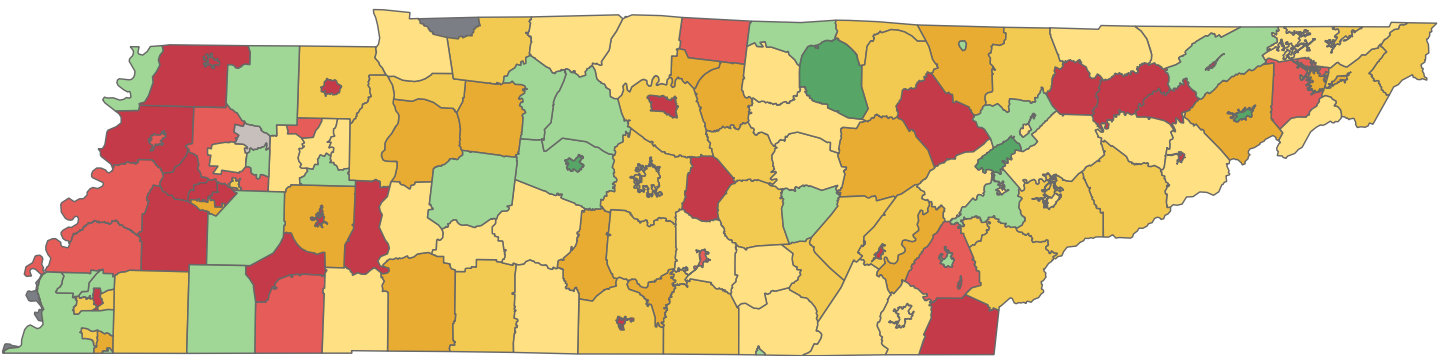


## Counselor Ratio

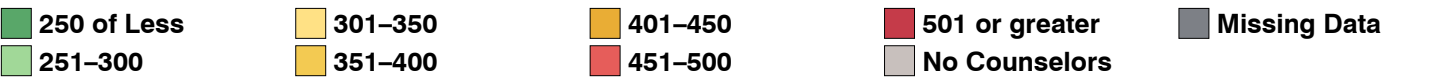




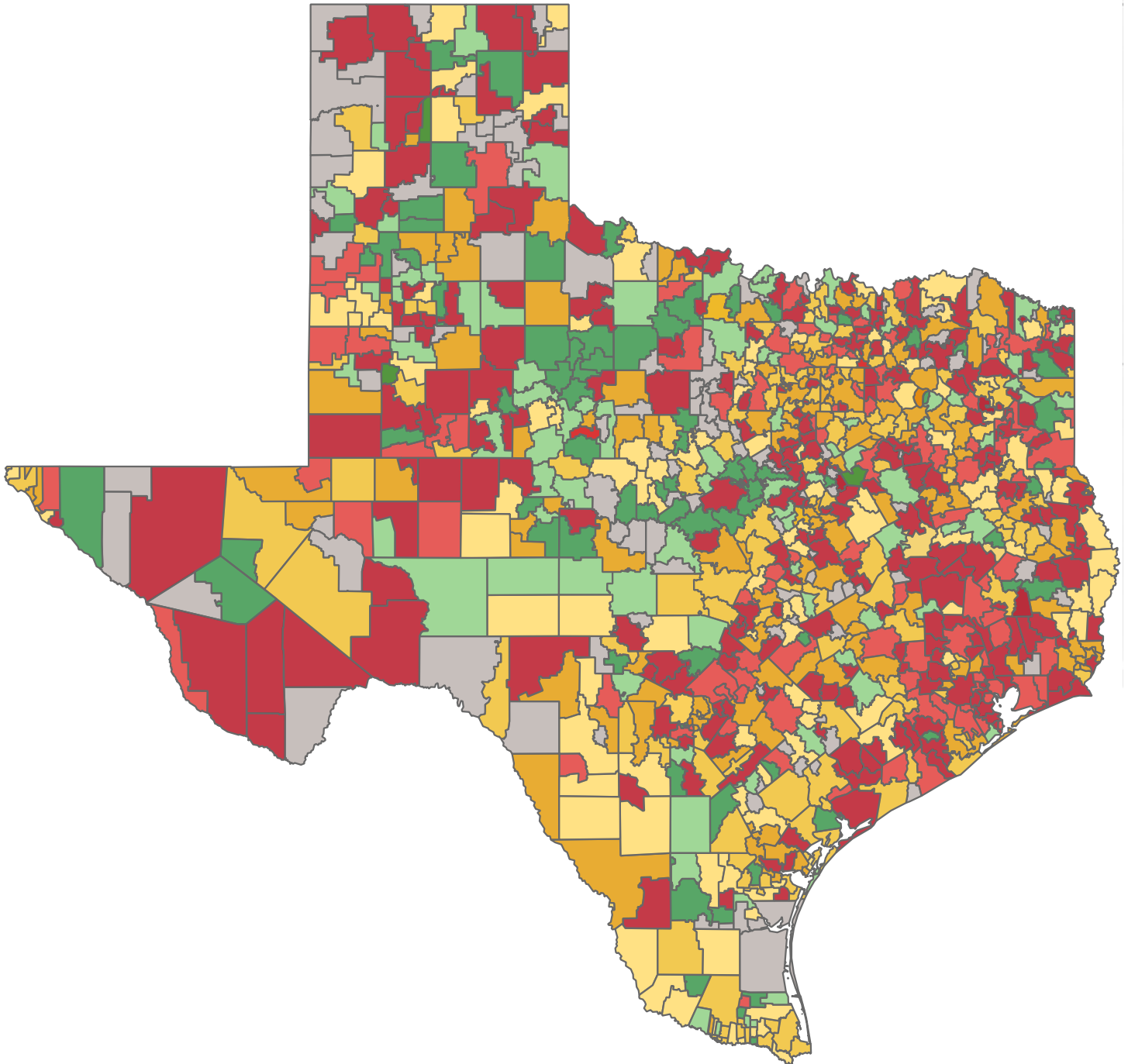
# Tennessee



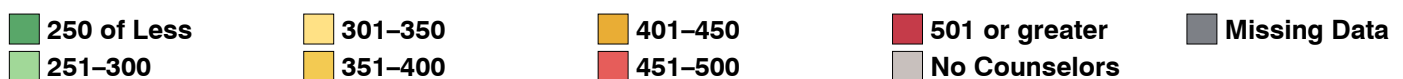
## Counselor Ratio



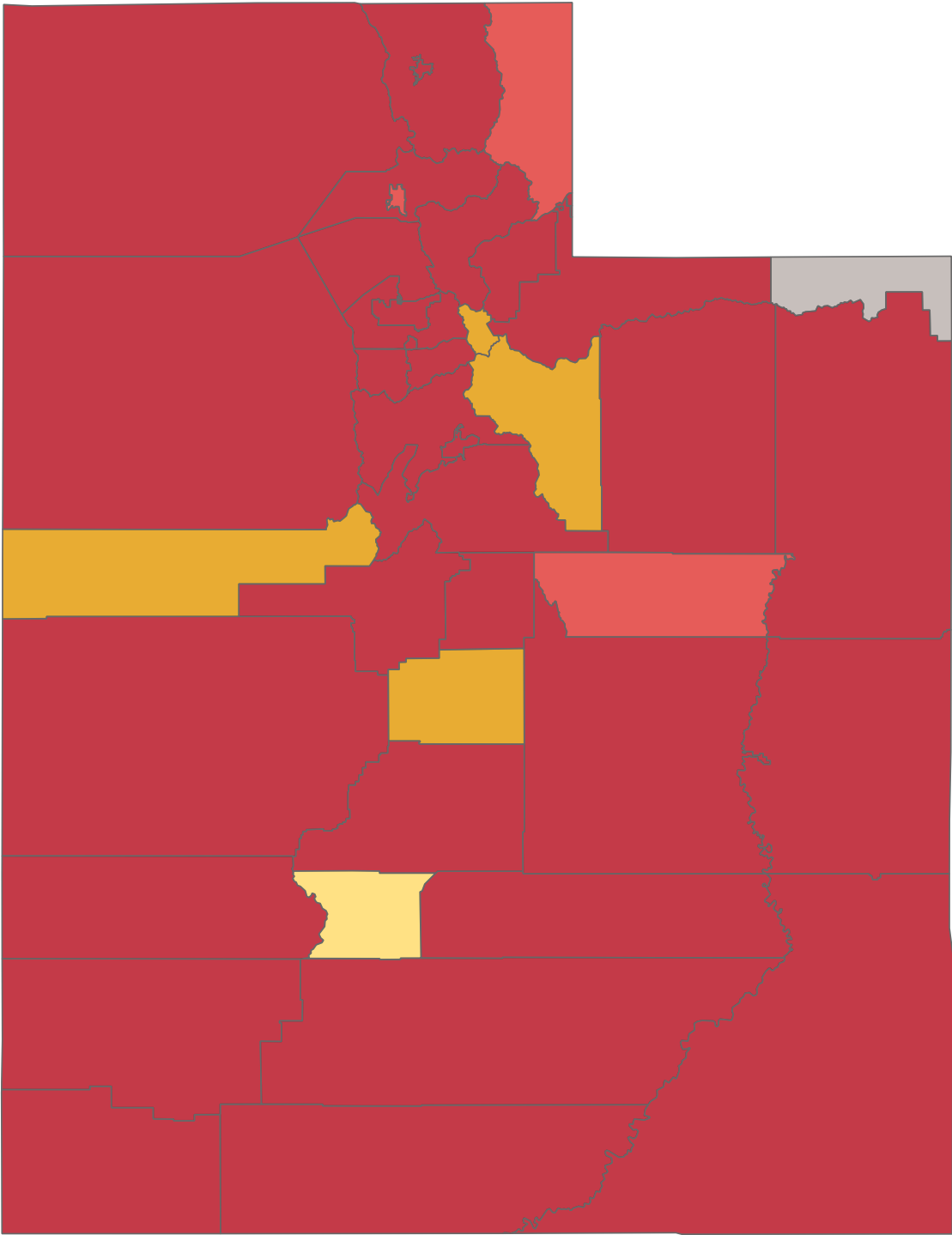
# Texas



## Counselor Ratio



# Utah



## Counselor Ratio

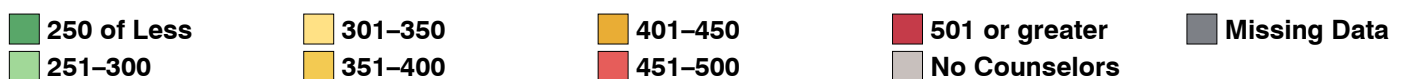
250 of Less	301-350	401-450	501 or greater	Missing Data
251-300	351-400	451-500	No Counselors	

# Vermont

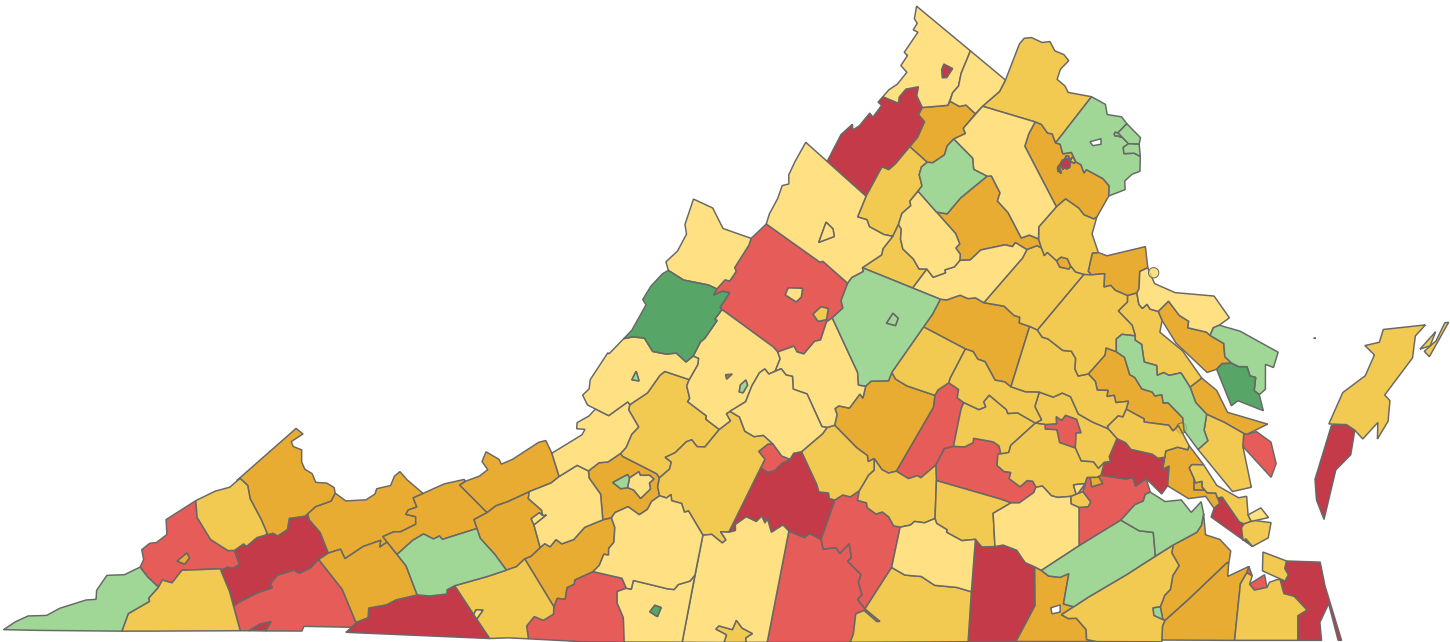


NOTE: Shapefiles for school district boundaries were unavailable from the US Census Bureau. School district-level ratios are presented in tabular format on NACAC's Tableau Public site.

## Counselor Ratio



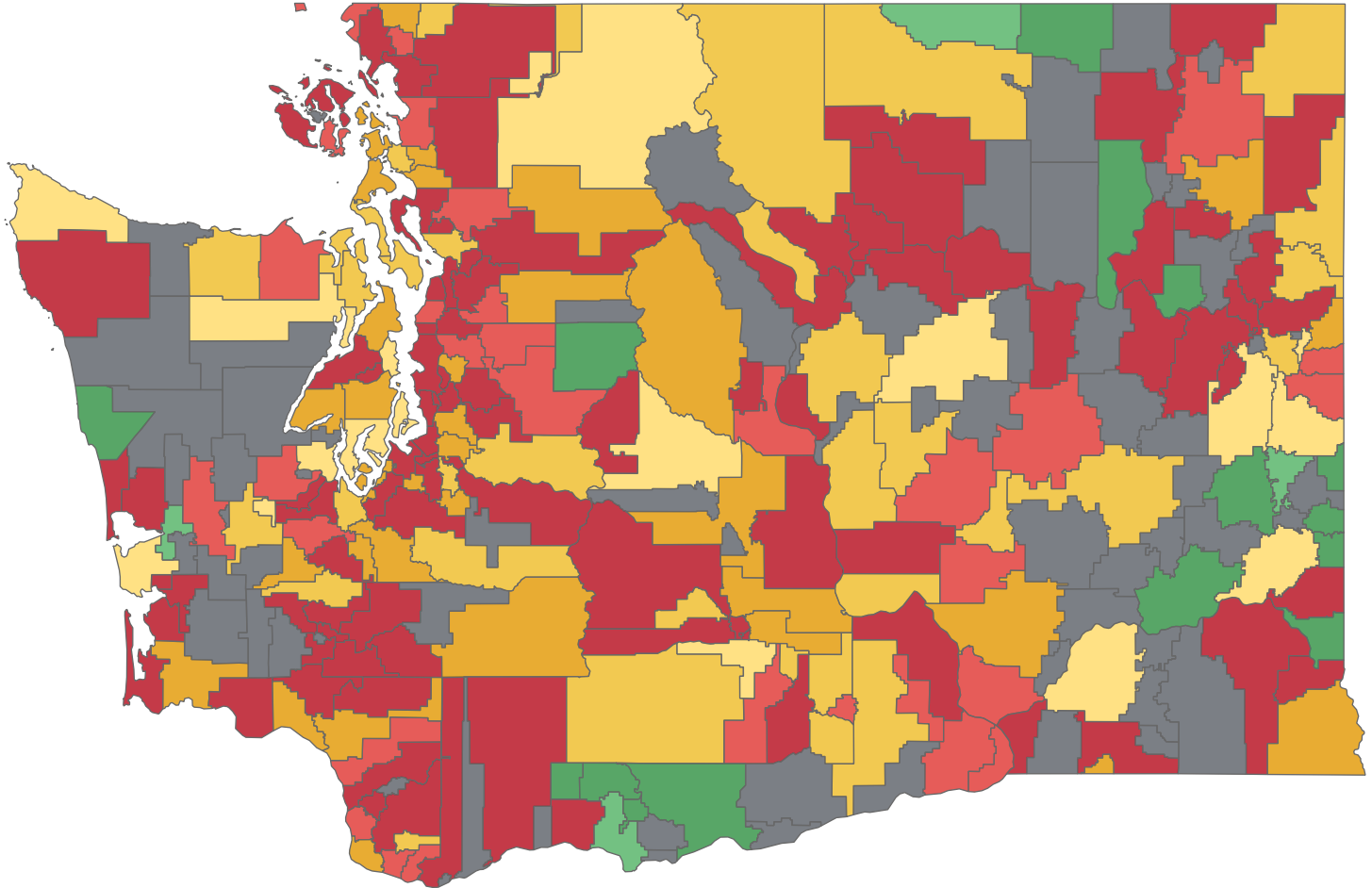
# Virginia



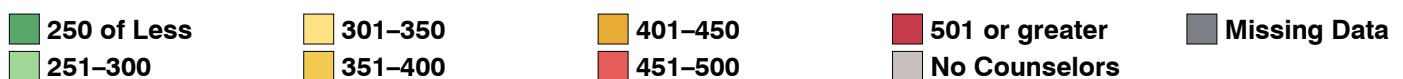
## Counselor Ratio

<div></div> 250 of Less	<div></div> 301–350	<div></div> 401–450	<div></div> 501 or greater	<div></div> Missing Data
<div></div> 251–300	<div></div> 351–400	<div></div> 451–500	<div></div> No Counselors	

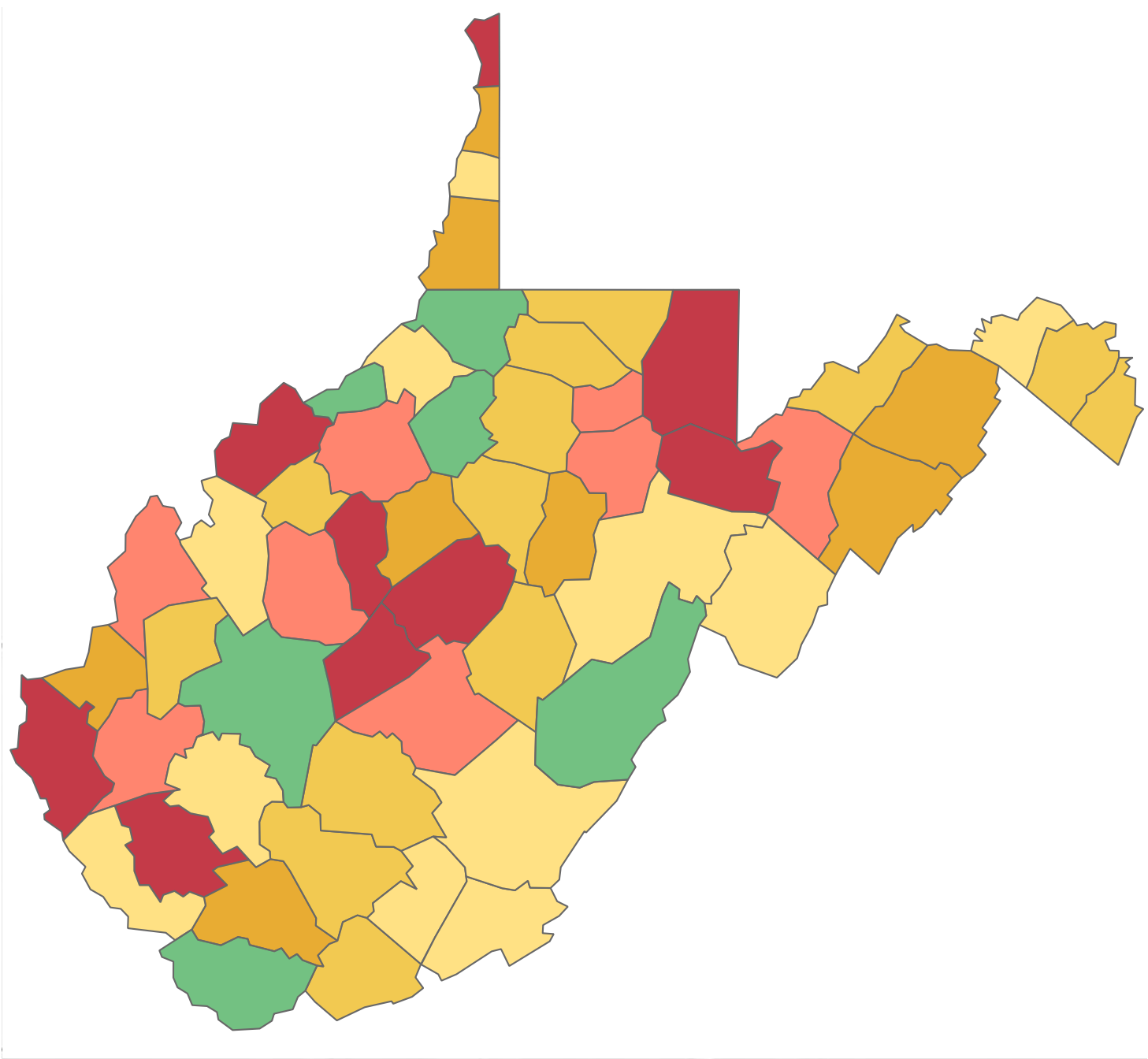
# Washington



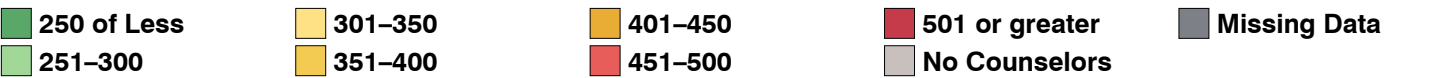
## Counselor Ratio



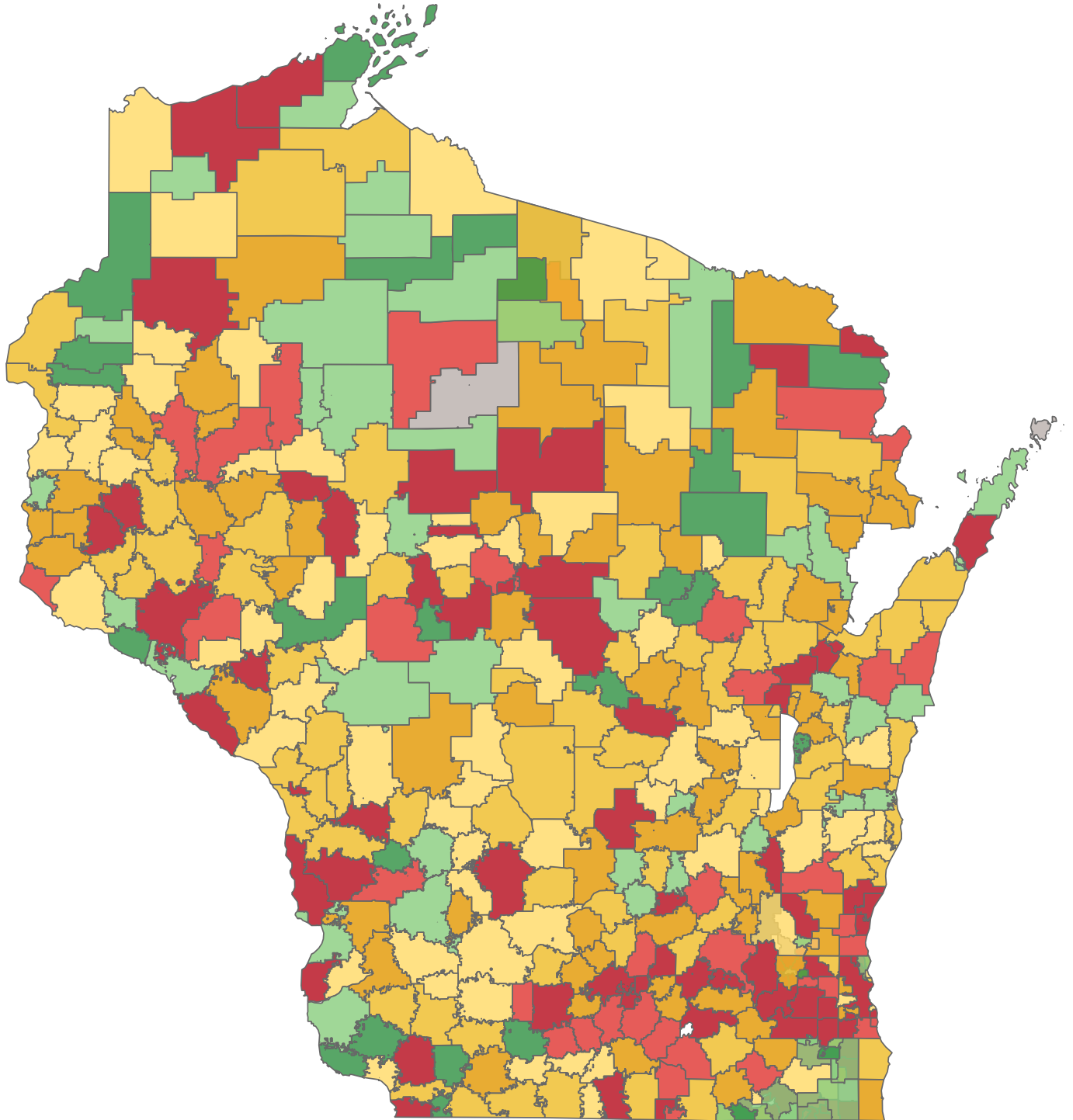
# West Virginia



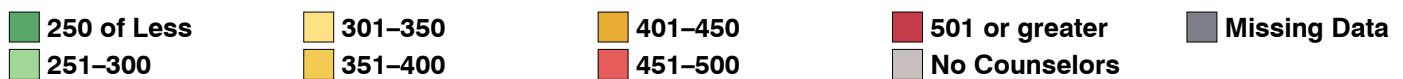
## Counselor Ratio



# Wisconsin

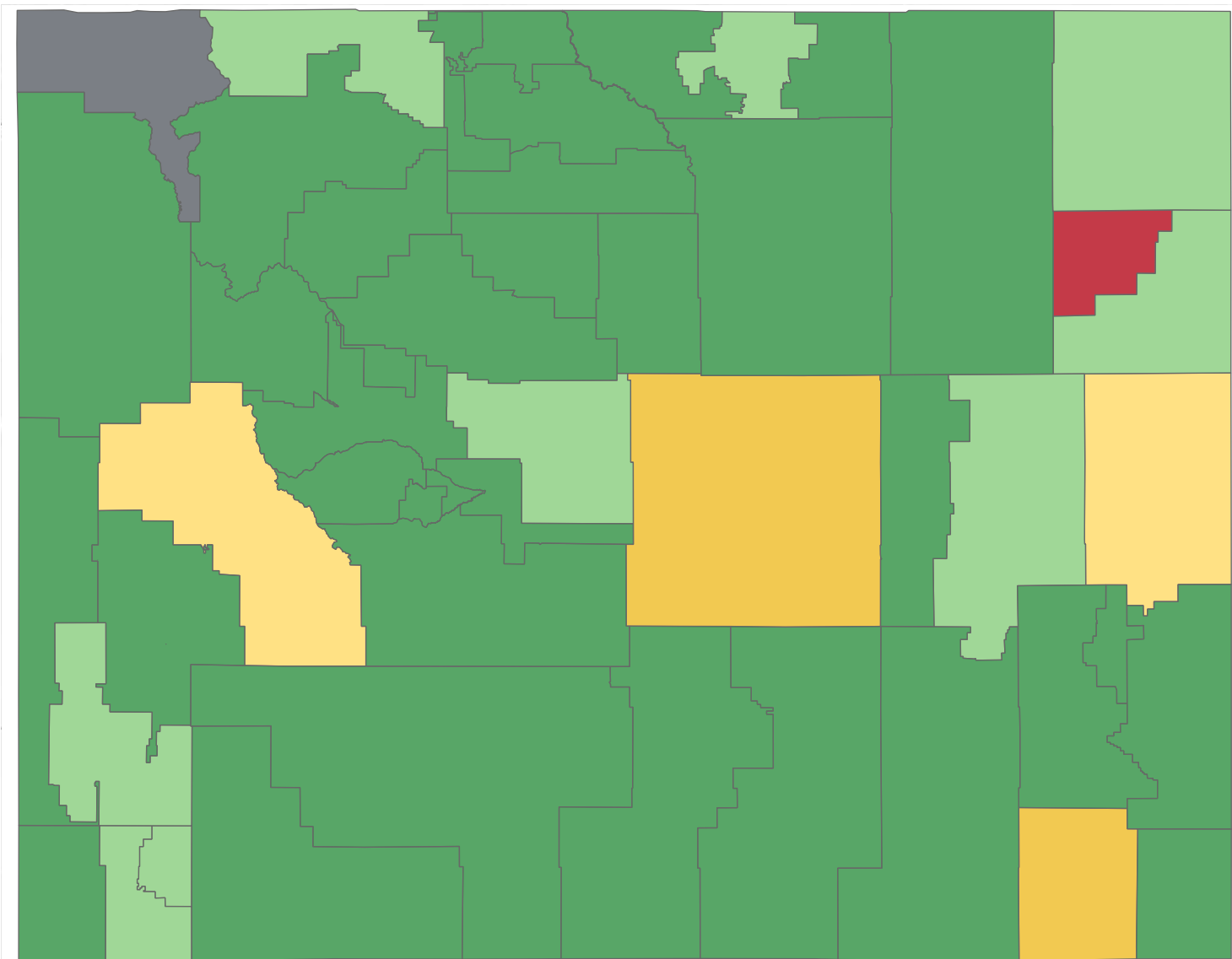


## Counselor Ratio





# Wyoming



## Counselor Ratio

250 or Less	301-350	401-450	501 or greater	Missing Data
251-300	351-400	451-500	No Counselors	

## About NACAC

The **National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)**, founded in 1937, is an organization of nearly 16,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education. NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the association's *Statement of Principles of Good Practice: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*.

# NACAC

National Association for  
College Admission Counseling

